



A DEVOTIONAL PROGRAM

DEDICATED TO

**THE LIFE AND TIMES
OF
JESUS CHRIST**

(Series 2 of 3)

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(1941 - 2012 / RIP)**



Happy are those whose way is blameless,
who walk in the law of the Lord.
Happy are they who observe his decrees,
who seek him with all their heart,
and do no wrong, but walk in his ways.
-----Psalm 119:1-2



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INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

Christianity has a story to tell. This story was lived out in the real world some 2000 years ago. It has continued every day since then, and continues to do so throughout the entire world.

As we explore the biblical text, we seek Christ and we get changed during that search. This can be the most thrilling experience of anyone's life. As we draw nearer and nearer to Jesus during our studies of his life and times, we dramatically encounter the Holy Spirit pervading our every thought and decision. The Holy Spirit is at work and active in us and among us in ways that change the world we touch, feel, and sense. With the Spirit at work in us, things start coming together, everything now working right and adding up for Christ.

Private, prayerful Bible reading is intimate and personal. The Bible can be the center for our prayers. As you read the Bible text, ask God to show you how to read it as He intended for it to be read. In other words, pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance in this search. Bible study is also the greatest method of building skills in spiritual discernment. It is the Spirit which leads and gives direction on all matters. He shows us what he wants us to do, and be. Before anything else, discernment is a gift from God. The Holy Spirit was present in that upper room where the believers had gathered together following Jesus' return to the Father. The Spirit did not ascend to Heaven as Jesus did, but remained and has been working throughout the years in those who listen. He guides each believer who is willing to listen, and He teaches them--by shedding light on the mysteries of life. Through the Spirit, we become more fully alive!!! In a sense we become under new management -- the Holy Spirit and you are one. Paul understood this concept so well. In Galatians 5:24-25 Paul says:
"Now those who belong to Christ [Jesus] have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit."

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PRAYER

Prayer is a window to God. Psalm 46:10 reads: "Be still, and know that I am God.... . Our soul, our spirit, our very being, needs to be in touch with the creator. When you pray it is a holy moment in time between you and God--a special moment that commands humility and reverence.

St. Frances of Assisi

Lord make me an instrument of thy peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,
Grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console,
To be understood as to understand,
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we are pardoned,
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

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SESSION 1

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD -- 27-30 AD

1. IN GALILEE -- 27-28 AD

John 4:43-45

Mark 1:14

Luke 4:14-15

1. Read John 4:43-45 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference
2. Read John 4:43
(1) No reference
3. Read John 4:44
(1) Matthew 13:57 (3) Luke 4:24
(2) Mark 6:4
4. Read John 4:45
(1) No reference

John 4:43-45

- 43 After the two days, he left there for Galilee.
44 For Jesus himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his native place.
45 When he came into Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, since they had seen all he had done in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves had gone to the feast.

Verse 43:

The journey that began in 4:1-3 has now concluded. (JBC)

Verse 44:

This saying is ascribed to Jesus in Mark 6:4; Matthew 13:57; and Luke 4:24. Because it does not seem to agree with verse 45, some have concluded that for John, Judea and not Galilee was Jesus' "native place." This, however, appears to be incompatible with 1:45. Rather, the verse appears to be parenthetical here: It is John's summary of the Galilean ministry, reflecting the same final judgment passed on it in the Synoptic tradition. (JBC)

Verse 45:

In this respect, we should remember that the enthusiasm based on the signs Jesus brought about in Jerusalem (cf. 3:2), although it might be the beginning of true faith, might just as easily prove to be illusory (cf. 2:23-25); such, in fact, was the case with the Galileans. The episode in Cana which follows this passage in John may be John's version of the cure recorded in other variant forms by Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10; such was the opinion of Irenaeus. The Synoptic narrative also appears at the beginning of the Galilean ministry. John has selected the story for his second "sign," which took

place in the same village of Cana. The first sign was only indirectly connected with the theme of life; in the second, life is spared from an immediate threat of destruction. The progression will reach its climax in chapter 11, when life becomes triumphant over death itself in the resurrection of Lazarus. (JBC)

Summary from IB:

The journey to Galilee (verse 3) is now resumed. It is difficult to see the point of the saying in verse 44 in this context. The proverb is quoted in similar form in all four Gospels (Mark 6:4; Matthew 13:57; and Luke 4:24), and it has been found in an expanded form elsewhere as: "A prophet is not acceptable in his own country, neither does the physician work cures upon those who know him." In all the Synoptics the words are Jesus' comment upon his rejection by his unbelieving fellow townsmen. Here the Galileans welcome Jesus because of all that they have seen him do in Jerusalem during the feast. The words may have been inserted at this point in the narrative because they were spoken in Galilee, and probably in Nazareth, according to the common tradition. But John seems to have changed the meaning of "his own country" and applied it to Jerusalem, the city of the Messiah, the place of the final rejection (cf. 1:11).

Overview from LToJC:

The brief harvest in Samaria was, as Jesus had indicated to his disciples, in another sense also the beginning of sowing time, or at least that time when the green blades first appear above the ground. It formed the introduction to that Galilean ministry, when "the Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem during the feast." In some respects, it was the real beginning of his work also, when it is viewed as separate and distinct from the Baptist's mission, and commencing when John the Baptist was placed in prison. This circumstance is especially marked by Matthew and Mark, while Luke abruptly connects this beginning of Christ's sole and separate work with the history of the temptation. All that intervened seemed to Luke nothing more than introductory information, the "beginning" he sums up in the words "in the power of the Spirit." In accordance with this view, Christ is presented as taking up the message of his forerunner, only with a wider sweep--He called those who heard him to "believe in the Gospel" which he brought to them.

The Gospel of John supplies the gap in the Synoptic narratives, which so often read only like brief historical summaries--with here and there special episodes or reports of teaching inserted. John not only tells us of that early ministry, which the Synoptists pass over. Like the Synoptists he refers to the captivity of John as the circumstance which led Christ to withdraw himself from the scheming of the Pharisaic party in Judea. He then joins this departure from Judea with the return to Galilee by supplying, as a connecting link, the brief stay in Samaria, along with its exciting results. John alone supplies the first recorded event of this Galilean ministry. We therefore follow his guidance, simply noting that the various stages of this Galilean residence should be grouped as follows: First Cana, then Nazareth, and then Capernaum. The period extended (by what is briefly indicated in the Gospels) from early summer, possibly the beginning of June, to the unnamed "feast of the Jews." If objections should arise that the events seem too few for a period of about three months, the obvious answer is that during most of this time, Jesus was probably alone (not attended by his disciples, since the call of the Apostles only took place after the "unnamed feast"). The disciples had, in

all probability, returned to their homes and ordinary occupations when Jesus went to Nazareth. They had not themselves been eyewitnesses to what happened there. Therefore they confined themselves to only a general summary of what happened in Nazareth. At the same time, Luke expressly marks that Jesus taught in the various synagogues of Galilee, and also that he stayed for a longer period of time in Capernaum.

5. Read Mark 1:14

(1) Matthew 4:12-17

(2) Luke 4:14-15

Mark 1:14

14 After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God:

From JBC:

After John had been arrested -- Some versions read "after John had been handed over." This is a foreshadowing of Jesus' own fate (9:31; 10:33; 14:10, 11, 44). (JBC)

Galilee -- The Galilean ministry is central in Mark. The evangelist probably introduced this locale systematically less for informational than for theological reasons--it is not only the scene of Jesus' earthly ministry, but it is also the meeting-place of the Risen Lord (16:7). Mark may be exhorting the Jerusalem church to turn its sights on this "Galilee," recognizing in the locale of Jesus' earthly ministry the scene of his impending parousia. (JBC)

proclaiming the gospel of God -- Some versions read "proclaiming God's good news." Possibly Jesus himself called his message "the good news," alluding to Isaiah 61:1-2; 49:9; and 52:7. However, the expressions "proclaim the good news" and "God's good news" are Christian terms found in Paul's writings (Galatians 2:2; Colossians 1:23; I Thessalonians 2:9). It is therefore more likely that this notice is an editorial addition giving only a summary of Jesus' preaching in specifically Christian terms (see 1:1). Similarly "believe in the good news" (1:15b) is a characterization of the Risen Christ's message. (JBC)

From IB:

According to Mark, Jesus' ministry began in Galilee after that of John the Baptist's ministry ended in Judea. "Put in prison" is correct. Literally, the Greek word means "delivered up" or arrested. "Came into Galilee" marks the beginning of the common evangelic tradition of the life of Jesus. Mark, the writer, is not a literary artist as is Luke, and Mark introduces the traditional passages with a minimum of transitional connections. In this section, he is not using any specific tradition but is freely editing--his statement makes no reference to what has gone before. His summary of Jesus' message has been influenced by the terminology of the later Christian mission; nevertheless, there can be no doubt that the main subject of Jesus' preaching was the Kingdom of God. Here "the gospel" means, for Mark, the message of Jesus himself; yet it is identical with that of the apostolic church (see also 6:12). "The gospel of the kingdom of God" is the correct form, rather than the "gospel of God," which is a Pauline term. It is a 19th century fiction that Mark was influenced in his writing by the apostle

Paul. All the manuscript evidence for “the kingdom of God” is ample. Moreover, it is in Mark’s style, and cannot be accounted for by textual assimilation to the parallels.

6. Read Luke 4:14-15 entirely through one time.

(1) Matthew 4:21-17

(2) Mark 1:14-15

Luke 4:14-15

14 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news of him spread throughout the whole region.

15 He taught in their synagogues and was praised by all.

From JBC:

The Synoptics, like the early apostolic preaching, omit any Judean ministry at the beginning of Jesus’ public life (cf. Acts 10:37f.), which is so prominent in John’s Gospel. If one uses information from John, Jesus, before inaugurating an extensive effort in Galilee, would have been in Jerusalem for a Passover (John 2:13, 23), at which time he swept the Temple clean of the money enterprisers (John 2:13-22) and met secretly with the Pharisee Nicodemus (John 3:1ff.) His extraordinary deeds attracted the attention of Galilean visitors (John 4:45). Then he traveled north through inhospitable Samaria (John 4). While Luke, who is theologically minded, states that Jesus returned to Galilee “in the power of the Spirit” (verse 14), Matthew explains that Jesus “withdrew,” fleeing from the wrath of the priests and Pharisees (Matthew 4:12; John 4:1).

Luke presents “an orderly account” of the public ministry; it does not bring Jesus to Jerusalem until the very end, for the climax of rejection by the Jews and the beginning of a world-wide apostolate to the Gentiles. The universal extent of the kingdom begins with Pentecost (Acts 2).

Here are some of the clues for Luke’s select use of Mark’s Gospel: Although Luke 4:19 - 9:50 reproduces Mark 1:14 - 9:39, it deliberately omits Mark 4:5 - 8:26; it therefore says nothing of Jesus’ journey into the Gentile area of Tyre and Sidon. At Luke 9:18 (Mark 8:27; Matthew 16:13 par.) nothing is said about Jesus’ presence among the villages of Caesarea Philippi. Luke wants an uninterrupted Galilean ministry so that the full force of the Jerusalem rejection can be understood.

From IB:

Luke bases his account of the return to Galilee on Mark 1:14-15. As in Mark and Matthew, Jesus’ public ministry begins in Galilee after the temptation prelude. He “returned in the power of the Spirit”: cf. 3:22; 4:1. Luke makes no mention of John’s imprisonment that has occurred during the meantime (Matthew 4:12; Mark 1:14). According to Luke, the only interruption of the Galilean ministry before Jesus’ final departure from Jerusalem (9:1) was a brief interlude in “the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee” (8:26)--unless Luke’s alteration of Mark’s “Galilee” (1:39) to “Judea” in 4:44 was intended to imply a preaching tour at this point that extended into other parts of Palestine.

Summary from LToJC:

When Jesus returned to Galilee, it was in circumstances entirely different from those under which he had left it. As he himself said, there had, perhaps naturally, been prejudices connected with the humbleness of his upbringing, and the familiarity

engendered by knowledge of his home-surroundings. These were overcome when the Galileans had witnessed, at the feast in Jerusalem, what He had done. Accordingly, they were now prepared to receive him with the reverent attention which his word claimed. We may conjecture, that it was partially for reasons such as these that he first went to Cana. The miracle, which had occurred there, would still further prepare the people for his preaching. Besides, this was the home of Nathanael, who had probably followed him to Jerusalem, and in whose house a happy homage of welcome would now await him. It was here that the second recorded miracle of his Galilean ministry unfolded. We can judge its effects upon the whole district by their eager expectations of him, even in his hometown of Nazareth.

a. HEALING OF A NOBLEMAN'S SON

John 4:46-54

7. Read John 4:46-54 entirely through one time.
 - (1) John 2:1-11
 - (2) Matthew 8:5-13
 - (3) Matthew 15:21-28
 - (4) Mark 7:24-30
 - (5) Luke 7:1-10
8. Read John 4:46-47
 - (1) No reference
9. Read John 4:48
 - (1) Wisdom 8:8
 - (2) Matthew 12:38
 - (3) John 2:18-23
 - (4) I Corinthians 1:22
10. Read John 4:49
 - (1) No reference
11. Read John 4:50
 - (1) I Kings 17:23

John 4:46-50

- 46 Then he returned to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. Now there was a royal official whose son was ill in Capernaum.
- 47 When he heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, who was near death.
- 48 Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe."
- 49 The royal official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies."
- 50 Jesus said to him, "You may go; your son will live." The man believed what Jesus said to him and left.

Verse 46:

[Cana in Galilee](#) -- John reminds us that the "first sign" also took place here. (JBC)

royal official -- Presumably this man held a position in the service of Herod Antipas, who was popularly styled “king”. John does not indicate whether he was a Jew or Gentile. (JBC)

Verse 47:

The official had obviously heard of the “signs” that Jesus had been performing in Jerusalem (cf. verse 45). Jesus’ healing miracles are not mentioned; it appears that the Evangelist presumes that the reader knows of them from the Synoptic tradition. (JBC)

Verse 48:

As in the previous miracle at Cana, Jesus’ initial reply is in an apparent refusal (cf. 2:4). However, his use of the plural (“you people”) rises to a general principle: Faith must not rest on miracles only. (JBC)

Verses 49-50:

Like Mary, the official recognizes that his request has not been definitively refused. The effect intended is now secured, for the man believes “the word Jesus spoke to him.” This is not to say that he had acquired perfect faith, but it was a beginning. (JBC)

[My thoughts: These verses should be considered as the 1st day of the narrative. In verse 51 the expression of “while he was on his way back” implies that the official had come to Jesus from Capernaum on that same day. The distance between Capernaum and Cana is about 25 miles. If he had left Capernaum early that same morning, he could not possibly have arrived in Cana by 1 PM (traveling time was immensely longer than it is today--conditions were very different). For example, if we consider the method of transportation the official would be using, it might possibly have been horseback. Now under his present situation, time would be of the essence in reaching Jesus and explaining his need. Traveling at a steady, yet rapid, pace on horseback would mean that the horse, by necessity, would have to take occasional short breaks to relieve the animals stress. The speed of the animal would also be considerably slower on rougher terrain, and any obstacles that were met along the way. At a maximum, his average speed in traveling would probably have been limited to no more than 4 or 5 miles an hour, and may be even less than that. This suggests that if the official had left his home early that morning, let’s say around 6 A.M, and he traveled at an average rate of speed of 4 miles an hour, he could have arrived in Cana around noon of that same day. He would then have to find Jesus to tell him of his need. We know from scripture that by one in the afternoon the officer had met Jesus and had been informed that his son would live. The Jewish day was set from 6 P.M. of one day to 6 P.M. of the second day.]

12. Read John 4:51-53
(1) No references

13. Read John 4:54
(1) John 2:11

John 4:51-54

- 51 While he was on his way back, his slaves met him and told him that his boy would live.

- 52 He asked them when he began to recover. They told him, "The fever left him yesterday, about one in the afternoon."
53 The father realized that just at that time Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live," and he and his whole household came to believe.
54 (Now) this was the second sign Jesus did when he came to Galilee from Judea.

Verses 51-53:

The creative word of Jesus effects the desired cure, which now appears to be not so much the cause of the man's faith but rather its consequence; signs and faith in the word go together (cf. 14:11; which is also a frequent insistence in the Synoptic miracle stories; for example, Mark 3:34 and parallels). (JBC)

Verse 54:

By an inclusion John once more connects the two signs at Cana. (JBC)

Summary of 4:46-54 from IB:

The story of the healing of the officer's son seems to be a variant tradition of the episode of the centurion's servant told by Matthew and Luke from a source other than Mark. A comparison of Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10 shows that even in the Synoptic tradition there are slight divergences. But the common matter is that when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion asked him to heal his paralyzed servant, but begged him not to come to his house, as he was unworthy of such honor. He knew the military principle of delegated authority--the only thing needed was a word spoken by Jesus at a distance which would effect the cure. Whereupon Jesus declared that he had not met with such faith in Israel. The differences are that Matthew speaks of a boy (the Greek word used here might mean either son or servant), while Luke uses the regular [Greek] word for servant or slave. Matthew speaks of the centurion as coming in person to Jesus. In Luke he sends elders of the Jews to plead with Jesus, and then as Jesus and the elders draw near to the house, he sends other friends to express his disapproval of Jesus' personal entry. Matthew speaks of paralysis; Luke says merely that the servant was at the point of death. Matthew closes the story with the words "And to the centurion Jesus said, 'Go; be it done for you as you have believed.' And the servant was healed at that very moment." Luke simply tells us: "And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave well."

In John's version of the story Jesus was at Cana, and a king's officer, whose son was ill, hearing at Capernaum "that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, ... went and begged him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death." Instead of commending his faith, Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." But he added, "Go; your son will live." The man went away believing the promise and was met by his servants who told him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him," the very time when Jesus assured him of the boy's recovery. The man and all his household became believers. Whereas Matthew writes "boy" John says "son." John's term "official," is literally "king's officer", which would suit the position of a Roman centurion in the service of Herod Antipas. John agrees with Luke in saying that the boy was at the point of death, but speaks of a fever, thus disagreeing with Matthew as to the nature of the illness. It could be that the words of rebuke were addressed to the bystanders, for the verbs are in the plural: "Unless you see you will not believe;" and this recalls sayings reported in the Synoptics (cf. Mark 8:11-12; Matthew 16:1-4; Luke

11:29) condemning the sign-seeking Jews. The man himself accepted the word of Jesus with faith. The “sign” followed when his servants informed him that the turn for the better was noticed at the very hour (one o’clock) when Jesus announced his recovery. Belief (verse 50) now become faith (verse 53). For the second time a miracle is recorded as having been brought about in Galilee after a long journey from Judea (verse 54). John does not provide us with a detailed account of those “signs” which took place in Jerusalem (verse 45; 2:23).

Summary from LToJC:

It appears that the son of one of Herod Antipas’ officers, either civil or military, was sick, and at the point of death. When news reached the father that the Prophet, or more than a Prophet, Whose fame had preceded him to Galilee, had come to Cana, he resolved, in his despair of other means, to request of Jesus the cure of his child.

Nothing can be gained for the spiritual interest of this or any other Biblical narrative, by exaggeration; but much is lost, when the historical demands of the case are overlooked. It is not from any disbelief in the supernatural agency at work, that we insist on the natural and rational sequence of events. And having done so, we can all the more clearly mark, by the side of the natural, the distinctively higher elements at work. Accordingly, we do not assume that this “officer” was motivated by spiritual belief in the Son of God, when applying to him for help. Rather we would go to almost the opposite extreme, and regard him as simply motivated by what in the circumstances, might be the views of a devout Jew. Instances are recorded in the Talmud, which may here serve as a guide. Various cases are related in which those seriously ill, and even at the point of death, were restored by the prayers of celebrated Rabbis. [It is not necessary to repeat these accounts here; however, for those who may be interested in researching the matter, sources for this information can be provided.]

The application to Jesus on the part of the “officer” did not, in the peculiar circumstances, lie absolutely beyond the range of Jewish ideas. What he exactly expected to be done, is a question secondary to that of his state of receptiveness, which was the moral condition of the outward help, and of the inward blessing which he received. One thing, however, is of importance to note. The request made of Jesus was itself an expression of faith by the official, although it was an imperfect faith. Besides, the cure could not have been reached without a miracle. What Jesus reproved was not the request for a miracle, which was necessary, but the urgent plea that he should come down to Capernaum for that purpose. That request argued ignorance of the real character of the Christ, as if He were either merely a Rabbi endowed with special power, or else a miracle-monger. What he intended to teach this man was that he, who had life in himself, could restore life at a distance just as easily as by his presence; by the power of his word as readily as by any personal application. This was a lesson of deepest importance, as regarded the person of Christ; it is also a lesson of the widest application for us and for all circumstances, temporal and spiritual.

When the officer had learned this lesson, he became “obedient unto the faith”, and “went his way,” presently to find his faith both crowned and perfected. And when both “he and his house” had learned that lesson, they would never afterwards think of the Christ as the Jews did, who simply witnessed his miracles [the external effect without any inward belief or faith]. It was the completion of that teaching which had first come to

Nathanael, the first believer of Cana. It is also when we have learned that lesson that we come to know the meaning and the blessedness of believing in Jesus.

As far as its moral import is concerned, the whole history turns upon this point. It also marks the fundamental differences between this and the somewhat similar history of the healing of the Centurion's servant in Capernaum. Critics have noticed marked divergences in almost every detail of the two narratives, which some--both orthodox and negative interpreters--have represented them as only different presentations of one and the same event. Besides these marked differences of detail, there is also a fundamental difference in the substance of the narratives, and in the spirit of the two applicants. In one case Jesus reproves the requirement of sight which by itself could only produce a transitory faith; in the other instance he marveled at the greatness of faith, for which he had in vain looked for in Israel. The great point in the history of the "court-officer" is Israel's mistaken view of the Person and work of the Christ. That in the narrative of the centurion is the preparedness of a simple faith, unencumbered by Jewish realism, although the outcome of Jewish teaching. The carnal realism of the other one, which looks for signs and wonders, is contrasted with the simplicity and straightforwardness of the other. Finally, the point in the history of the Syro-Phoenician woman, which is sometimes confounded with it, is the intensity of the same faith which, despite discouragements, seemingly improbabilities, holds fast by the conviction which her spiritual instinct had grasped--that such a one as Jesus must be not only the Messiah of the Jews, but also the Savior of the world.

Negative criticism is sometimes unwilling to admit that Jesus really brought about the miracle. In explaining what brought about the cure, they suggest that the sick child, to whom the father had previously communicated his intention to seek help from Jesus, had been in a state of expectancy which, when the courtier returned with the joyous assurance that the request was granted, it then became an actual recovery. There is an obvious answer to this criticism--the explanation needs the first requirement; that of a historical basis. There is not an iota of evidence that the child expected a cure; while, on the other hand, the narrative expressly states that he was cured before his father's return. And, if the narrative may be altered at will to suit the necessities of a groundless hypothesis, it is difficult to see which, or whether any, part of it should be retained. It is not so that the origin of a faith, which has transformed the world, can be explained. We have here another evidence of the fact, that objections which seem so formidable to some can utterly break down when viewed as a part of a connected system, and when each narrative is carefully examined in detail.

There are other circumstances in this history which require at the least a passing consideration. Of these the principle ones are (1) the time when the servants of the court-officer met him, on his return journey, with the joyful tidings that his son lived; (2) the time when "he began to improve;" and (3) the time when the "court-official" applied to Jesus. Considering 2 and 3--these events evidently coincided. The exact time indicated by the servants' as the commencement of the improvement is "Yesterday, at the seventh hour." By what words the Jewish servants may originally have expressed themselves, it seems impossible to assume, that John intended any other than the Roman notation of the civil day, or that he meant any other hour than 7 PM. The opposite view that it marks Jewish notation of time, or 1 PM, is beset by almost insurmountable difficulties. We

must bear in mind that the distance between Capernaum and Cana is about twenty-five miles, it would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the court-officer, leaving his home that morning, not only to have reached Cana, but to have had the interview with Jesus by 1 PM. The difficulty is only increased, when we are asked to believe, that after such a journey the officer had immediately set out on his return. This is absolutely necessary for the theory, since a Jew would not have set out on such a journey after dusk. Furthermore, on the above supposition, the servants of the court official must have taken to the road immediately, or very soon after the improvement began. This is unlikely, and it is counter-indicated by the terms of the conversation between the officer and the servants, which imply that they had waited until they were certain of the recovery ("the fever left him yesterday, about one in the afternoon"), and not merely a temporary improvement. Let's suppose that the servants met the father midway between Capernaum and Cana, if not near Capernaum, and said: "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him" meaning thereby, that as they spoke it, in the evening, when another Jewish day had begun, the fever had left him on the afternoon of the same day, although according to Jewish reckoning, "yesterday" would have to be reckoned as 1 P.M. of the previous day. It may be safely affirmed, that no Jew would have expressed himself in this way. If, on the evening of a day, they had referred to what had taken place five or six hours previously, at 1 PM, they would have said: "At the seventh hour the fever left him" and not "Yesterday at the seventh hour."

We can understand how, leaving Capernaum in the morning, the interview with Jesus and the simultaneous cure of the child would have taken place about seven o'clock in the evening. Its result was not only the restoration of the child, but that also of he who was no longer required to see signs and wonders "the man believed the word which Jesus had spoken to him." In this joyous assurance, which needed no more ocular demonstration, he "went his way", either to the hospitable home of a friend, or to some near-by lodging place on the way, to be next day met by the happy news that it had been done for him, according to his faith. The whole morale of the history lies in this very matter, and it marks the spiritual receptiveness of the father, which, in turn, was the moral condition of his desire being granted. We learn again that by the very granting of his desire, the spiritual object of Christ in the teaching of the officer was accomplished, how under certain spiritual conditions in him and upon him, the temporal benefit accomplished its spiritual object. In this also there are lessons of deepest teaching to us, and for all times and circumstances.

Whether this "court-officer" was *Chuza* (Herod's steward), whose wife, under the abiding impression of this miracle to her child, afterwards humbly, gratefully ministered to Jesus, must remain undetermined at this time. It is enough to mark the progress in the "court-official" from belief in the power of Jesus to faith in his word, and therefore to have absolute faith in him, with its blessed expansive effect on that whole household. We are also led faithfully and effectually, yet gently, by his benefits, upwards from the lower stage of belief by what we see him do, to that higher faith which is absolute and unseeing trust, springing from experimental knowledge of what he is.

SESSION 2

The stay in Cana was probably only of short duration. It was perhaps the Sabbath of that same week that Jesus could be found in the synagogue at Nazareth. As we follow Jesus to the city of his childhood, his soul may have stirred as He once more entered the well-known valley, and beheld the scenes to each of which some early memory was attached. It had only been a few months since he had left Nazareth. The Sabbath morning was here, and he got up early to go to the Synagogue where as a child, youth, and as a young man he had so often went to worship. The old-well known faces were around him, the old well-remembered words and services fell on his ear.

Before we listen to our 1st reader I would like to provide you with some background information concerning the synagogues in Palestine.

Overview from LToJC:

Synagogues originated during, or in consequence of the, Babylon captivity. The OT contains no allusion to their existence, and the Rabbinic attempts to trace them to patriarchal times deserve no serious consideration. We can readily understand how during the long years of exile in Babylon, places and opportunities for common worship on Sabbaths and feast-days must have been felt almost like a necessity. This would furnish the basis for the institution of the synagogue. After the return to Palestine, and still more by “the dispersed abroad,” such meeting-houses would be absolutely required. It was here that those who were ignorant even of the language of the OT would have the Scriptures read, and “targumed”, or interpreted, to them. It was natural that prayers and addresses should in the course of time be added. Therefore the regular synagogue service would gradually arise, first on Sabbaths and on feast- and fast-days, then on ordinary days, at the same hours as, with a sort of internal correspondence to the worship of the Temple. The services on Mondays and Thursdays were special, these being the ordinary market-days when the country-people came into the towns where they would avail themselves of the opportunity for bringing any case that might require a legal decision before the local Sanhedrin, which met in the synagogue, and consisted of its authorities. These two week-days would be used to provide the country-people who lived a far distance from the synagogues, opportunities for worship. The services on these days were of a somewhat more elaborate character. Accordingly, Monday and Thursday were called “the days of congregation” or “Synagogue (*Yom ha-Kenisah*).”

The institution of synagogues grew rapidly and spread among the Jews of the Dispersion in all lands. In Palestine they were scattered over the whole country, although it is only reasonable to suppose, that their number greatly increased after the destruction of the Temple in 60 A.D. In Jerusalem and probably in some other large cities, there were not only several synagogues, but they were also arranged according to nationalities, and even crafts. At the same time, even in so important a place as Capernaum, there seems either not to have been a synagogue, or that it was utterly insignificant until the need was supplied by a pious Gentile centurion (Luke 7:5). This would seem to dispose of the question that it was the case, as generally assumed, that a Jewish community which had ten heads of families was obliged to build a synagogue, and could then enforce taxation for the purpose. Such was undoubtedly a later Rabbinic ordinance--there is no evidence that it was upheld in Palestine in early times.

Generally a community would build its own synagogue, or else depend on the charitable assistance of neighbors, or on private contributions. If this failed, they might meet for worship in a private dwelling, a sort of "Synagogue in the house." In early times the institution would be much more simple than at a later time. There is no evidence of the synagogues which prevailed while the Temple stood, nor of the chief customs existing in Palestine. The Rabbinic directions mark rather an ideal than the actual state of things. For example, there is no evidence that in Palestine Synagogues were always required to be built in the highest situation in a town, or even built so as to overtop the other houses. Even where the Jews were most powerful and influential, the rule could not have been universally enforced, although later Rabbis lay it down as a principle.

There were two rules which were, however, enforced. One of these enjoined that a synagogue should not be erected in a place if it did not contain at least ten men of leisure who could devote their time to the Synagogue worship and administration. Common worship implied a congregation, which according to Jewish law, must consist of at least ten men. One of the most important rules was the direction in which Synagogues were to be built, and which worshippers should occupy during prayer. Prayer to the east was always condemned, on the ground of the false worship towards the east mentioned in Ezekiel 8:16. The prevailing direction in Palestine was towards the west, as in the Temple. The entrance into the synagogue was by the east, as was the entrance into the Sanctuary of the Temple through the Beautiful Gate in Jerusalem. In some places, the advice is simply given to turn towards Jerusalem, in whatever direction that might be. In general, however, it was considered that since the Shekhinah was everywhere in Palestine, direction was not of paramount importance.

On the Friday evening before the weekly Sabbath arrived, each house was adorned. The Sabbath lamp was lit; the festive garments put on; the table provided with the best which the family could afford; and the benediction was spoken over the cup of wine which was always mixed with water. Then as the Sabbath morning broke, the people hastened with quick steps to the Synagogue; for it was the Rabbinic rule for going to the Synagogue, while it was prescribed to return with slow and lingering steps. Jewish promptness defined every movement and attitude in prayer.

During the Sabbath in the synagogue, the officials would have all been assembled. (1) The lowest of these was the "minister", who often acted as a schoolmaster also. Because the conduct of the services frequently devolved upon him, great care was given in the selection of the minister. (2) Then there were the "elders", the rulers, or the shepherds. (3) Then there would also be a "chief ruler". All the rulers of the synagogue were duly examined as to their knowledge, and ordained to their individual offices. They formed the local Sanhedrin, or tribunal. But their election depended on the choice of the congregation.

Although the chief ruler of the synagogue was only first among his equals, there can be no doubt that the virtual rule of the synagogue devolved upon him. He would superintend the Divine service and, since this was not conducted by the regular officials, he would in each case determine those who were to be called up to read from the Law and the Prophets, who was to conduct the prayers and act as a messenger of the congregation, and who, if any, was to deliver an address. He would also see to it that nothing improper took place in the synagogue, and that the prayers were properly conducted. In short, the

supreme care, both of the services and the building would fall upon him. To these regular officials we have to add those who officiated during the service, the delegate of the congregation who conducted the devotions, the interpreter, and those who were called on to read in the Law and the Prophets, or else to preach.

* * * * *

b. IN THE SYNAGOGUE AT NAZARETH
Luke 4:16-28

1. Read Luke 4:16-28 entirely through one time.
(1) Matthew 13:53-58 (2) Mark 1:14-15
2. Read Luke 4:16-17
(1) No reference
3. Read Luke 4:18-19
(1) Isaiah 61:1-2 (2) Isaiah 58:6
4. Read Luke 4:20-21
(1) No reference

Luke 4:16-21

- 16 He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read
- 17 and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:
- 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,
- 19 and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord."
- 20 Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him.
- 21 He said to them, "Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."

From JBC:

Luke's account of Jesus' rejection by his fellow townsmen combines three or at least two separate visits to the city. The first visit (Luke 4:16-22a) is recorded also by Matthew 4:13. It seems that both writers depend upon a common source here which is attested by the unique spelling "Nazara," which is found nowhere else in the NT. Matthew provides the historical context for the visit. Some argue that Luke 4:22b-30 represent two distinct visits to Nazareth, because only verses 22b-24 find a parallel in Matthew 13:54-58 and Mark 6:1-6 (possibly = John 4:44; 6:42). Later, when Luke is relying upon Mark for information (Mark 5:43 = Luke 8:56; Mark 6:7 = Luke 9:1), he passes over the Nazareth incident (Mark 6:1-6). Because verses 25-30 are distinctly from Luke's own hand, not just in content but more especially in doctrinal outlook, Luke may

simply be using the occasion to develop his own theology of Jesus' rejection by his own people and the call of the Gentiles.

From IB:

Luke omits the summary of Jesus' message in Mark 1:15 and puts a representative illustration in its place. The narrative is based on Mark 6:1-6 which is omitted at the corresponding point (following 8:56) in Luke's Gospel. It is uncertain whether Luke expanded Mark on his own initiative, or discovered the material in some special source and adapted it to Mark. At any rate he altered Mark's order to make the incident a dramatic preface to Jesus' ministry. Matthew also implies a preliminary visit to Nazareth (Matthew 4:13) before the commencement of the work at Capernaum (in contrast to Mark), and the notice may have stood in the Q source.

Verses 16-22a:

Jesus' first visit to Nazareth after the opening of his ministry is now recorded (Matthew 4:13 par). We cannot be certain in reconstructing the Sabbath synagogue services in Jesus' times, but somewhat later it included: (1) two prayers, the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Numbers 15:37-41; cf. Luke 10:27) and the Eighteen Blessings; (2) two readings, one from the Torah and the other from the prophets (either the earlier prophetic books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings) or the later prophetic books (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the minor prophets); (3) an explanation or homily (cf. Acts 13:15); and (4) finally, the priestly blessing (Numbers 6:22-27). (JBC)

Verse 16:

Worship in a Palestinian synagogue consisted of the recitation of the Shema, a prayer, a fixed textual reading from the Law, a free textual reading from the prophets, an explanation and application of one or both of the scriptural passages, and a blessing by a priest or a prayer by a layman. The scripture was read in Hebrew, but a translator turned it, verse by verse, into Aramaic. There was no official "minister". An invitation to read and to preach could be extended by the ruling elders to any competent member of the congregation or visitor (cf. Acts 13:15). It was the practice to stand up to read, and to sit down to preach (verses 20-21). (IB)

Verse 17:

[found the passage](#) -- He either found the passage by accidentally opening the scroll to a passage in Isaiah (at least one scholar suggests this to be the case), or by deliberately seeking the exact spot (the majority of commentators agree this to be the case). This is the only clear reference in the Scriptures that Jesus knew how to read. (JBC)

Since it is improbable that the book or "codex" form of papyrus was yet in use, another possible translation of this verse would be: "And the roll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him, and he unrolled it." The Law was read through over a period of three years--one year in Babylonia--but the reader chose his own selection from the prophets. (IB)

Verses 18-19:

In quoting from Isaiah 61:1-2, Jesus leaves out one of the lines, "to heal the brokenhearted." Luke reserves the Greek word meaning "to heal," for physical cures. A little later in verse 23 Jesus refuses to work such cures in Nazareth, for his concern here is with preaching and interior renewal. A line, therefore, is added instead from Isaiah 58:6;

“to send away free the oppressed.” Although the Vulgate and some late Greek manuscripts include the line “and the day of vindication” at the end of verse 19, important manuscripts do not contain the words, which for Luke put too much emphasis upon punishment; he deletes the same words in 7:22 when he once more cites Isaiah. (JBC)

The greater part of this short reading is from the LXX text of Isaiah 61:1-2. “To heal the broken-hearted” is a clause in the source that is omitted by the best manuscripts from Luke. “To set at liberty those who are oppressed” is from the LXX text of Isaiah 58:6. Both the LXX original and Luke’s version should be punctuated as follows: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Because he has anointed me; He has sent me to preach good news to the poor; to proclaim release to the captives....” The original expressed some postexilic prophet’s consciousness of mission. The same passage underlies Jesus’ words to the emissaries of John the Baptist in 7:22 (Matthew 11:5). Therefore, Jesus as well as the evangelist may have interpreted it as illuminating his commission. In its present context, Luke’s “he has anointed me” refers to Jesus’ baptism. It is characteristic of Luke’s conception of Jesus that he was sent “to preach good news to the poor” (cf. 6:20). The Hebrew original of “the acceptable year of the Lord” is best translated “the year of the Lord’s favor”. In our context the phrase has reference to the messianic age. (IB)

Verse 18:

[The Spirit of the Lord is upon me](#) -- In Luke this would refer to Jesus’ own baptism (3:22; Acts 10:38). (JBC)

[to bring glad tidings to the poor](#) -- In 7:22 Jesus points to this action as indicative of his Messianic mission. Used without an article in Greek, the word “poor” refers to a quality or state rather than to individual poor persons. (JBC)

[He has sent me](#) -- The perfect tense of the Greek verb means more than merely to be sent; it declares that the one sent has already arrived and is to be found in the person of Jesus. (JBC)

Verse 19:

[and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord](#) -- All the hopes of the jubilee year (Leviticus 25:8-55), when debts were wiped out and all possessions returned to their original owner, are fulfilled in the Messianic presence of Jesus. Universalism characterizes the jubilee year, for the celebration rests on the explanation given by God that “[all] land is mine, and you are but aliens” (Leviticus 25:23). God graciously divides it among all his elect. (JBC)

Verse 20:

The synagogue “attendant” was engaged to act in various capacities within the synagogue. He literally did all that was required to maintain worship. His duties ranged from teaching children to scourging criminals, and it included that of taking the scripture roll from the ark and returning it. As in Acts 6:15 and 10:4, the verb that here is translated “were fixed” suggests an atmosphere of suspense. (IB)

Verse 21:

[this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing](#) -- These words are spoken out of the biblical understanding of the power of the word of God (Isaiah 55:10f.). Again, the perfect tense of the verse (“today”) indicates that the moment of salvation is already being

achieved in the person of Jesus; the effects of his presence, or rather, his continuing presence through the gift of the Spirit in the preaching of prophets and apostles (Ephesians 2:20), keeps the divine word always being felt. (JBC)

Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing -- According to Luke, Jesus' first public announcement claims that he is the fulfillment of the OT prediction. The Messiah has come and with him the new era of "the Lord's favor"--the kingdom of God. (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

On his entrance into the synagogue, or perhaps before that, the chief ruler would request Jesus to act for that Sabbath as the messenger of the congregation. For according to the Mishnah, the person who read in the synagogue the portion from the prophets, was also expected to conduct the devotions, or at least in greater part. If this rule was enforced at that time, then Jesus would ascend to the reader's stand, and while standing at the lectern, begin the service by two prayers. After this came the Jewish Creed, or Shema, which consisted of three passages from the Pentateuch, so arranged that the worshiper took upon himself the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven, and only after it the yoke of the commandments. Of the commandments, first came those that applied to the day only, then those which pertained only to the night. The recitation of the Shema was then followed by another prayer. After this such prayers were inserted as were suited for that day. And here it may be noticed that considerable latitude was allowed. For, although it was not lawful to insert any petitions in the first three eulogies, the practice was observed in the intermediate Benedictions.

The liturgical part being completed, one of the most important, in fact, the primary object of the synagogue service began. The minister, approached the ark, and brought out a roll of the Law. It was taken from its case, and unwound from those cloths which held it. The time had now come for the reading of portions from the Law and the prophets. On the Sabbath, at least seven persons were called upon successively to read portions from the Law, none of them consisting of less than three verses. It was otherwise on the "days of congregation", on Mondays and Thursdays, which is not necessary to mention at this time. According to the Talmud, a descendant of Aaron was always called up first to the reading; then followed a Levite, and afterwards five ordinary Israelites. Since this practice, as was well as those of priestly benedictions, have been continued in the synagogue from father to son, it is possible still to know who are descendants of Aaron and who are Levites. The reading of the Law was both preceded and followed by brief benedictions.

After the reading of the Law followed a reading from a section of the prophets. The origin of this practice is not known, although it is one that must evidently have met a requirement on the part of the worshipers. It is certain that the present lectionary from the prophets did not exist in early times, nor does it seem unlikely that the choice of the passage was left to the reader himself. As the Hebrew was not generally understood, the Interpreter, stood by the side of the reader, and translated the Law into the Aramaean going verse by verse, and in the section from the prophets, he translated after every three verses. The Interpreter was not allowed to read his translation, so that it might not be popularly regarded as authoritative. This may help us in some measure to understand the popular mode of OT quotations in the NT. As long as the substance of the text was

given correctly, the Interpreter might paraphrase for better popular understanding. It is natural to suppose, that the Interpreter would prepare himself for his work by such materials as he could find on hand, among which, of course, the translation of the LXX would hold a prominent place.

The reading of the section from the prophets was in olden times immediately followed by an address, a discourse, or sermon; that is, where a Rabbi capable of giving such instruction was present, or perhaps a distinguished stranger. After the reading from the prophets, followed by the interpretation, the preacher would sit down and begin his discourse. No one would interrupt him with questions until he had finished, then a succession of objections, answers, or inquiries might be delivered by others. It is interesting to know that, at the close of his address, the preacher very generally referred to the great Messianic hope of Israel. The service then closed with a short prayer.

Neither the leader of the devotions, nor the Interpreter, nor even the preacher required ordination. That was reserved for the “rule of the congregation”, whether in legislation or administration, doctrine or discipline. Jewish tradition uses the most extravagant terms to extol the institution of preaching. How general this practice was in the time of Jesus and the Apostles is fully borne out by Josephus and Philo. Both the Jerusalem and Babylon Talmud assume it to be so common, that in several passages the “Sabbath observance” and the “Sabbath sermon” are identified. Long before Hillel we read of Rabbis preaching--in Greek or Latin--in the Jewish synagogues of Rome, just as the Apostles preached in Greek in the synagogues of the dispersed. This practice, and the absolute liberty of teaching, subject to the authority of the “chief ruler of the synagogue,” formed important links in the Christianization of the world.

Further summary from LToJC:

It seems likely that Jesus commenced the first part of the service, and then pronounced before the ark, those eulogies which were regarded as, in the strictest sense, the prayer. We can imagine the reverent solemnity, which would seem to give a new meaning to each well-remembered sentence. In his mouth, it all had a new meaning. We cannot know what, if any, petitions he inserted, although we can imagine what their spirit would have been. Then, one by one, Priest, Levite, and, in succession, five Israelites, had read from the Law. There is no reason to disturb the almost traditional idea, that Jesus Himself, read the concluding portion from the prophets. The entire narrative seems to imply this.

When unrolling and holding the scroll, much more than the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah must have been within range of Jesus’ eyes. It is quite certain that the verses quoted by Luke could not have formed the entire portion from the prophets that was to be read that day. According to traditional rule, the portion from the prophets which was to be read ordinarily consisted of not less than twenty-one verses, although, if the passage was to be “targumed,” or a sermon to follow, that number might be shortened to seven, five, or even three verses. The passage quoted by Luke consists really of only one verse (Isaiah 61:1), together with a clause from Isaiah 63:6, and the first clause of Isaiah 61:2. This could scarcely have formed the complete portion to be read. If, we suppose, the passages quoted formed the introductory text of Christ’s discourse, such quotation and combination would be not only in accordance with Jewish custom, but it would also have formed part of the favorite mode of teaching, the stringing, like pearls, passage to

passage, illustrative of each other. In the present instance, the portion of the scroll which Jesus unrolled may have exhibited in close proximity the two passages which formed the introductory text. Both the omission of a clause from Isaiah 61:1, and the insertion of another adapted from Isaiah 63:6, were evidently intentional. It might be presumptuous to attempt stating the reasons which may have influenced Jesus in this, and yet some will instinctively occur to every thoughtful reader.

It was, indeed, Divine wisdom-- "the spirit of the Lord" upon him, which directed Jesus in the choice of such a text for his first Messianic sermon. It struck the key-note to the whole of his Galilean ministry. The ancient synagogue regarded Isaiah 61:1-2 as one of the three passages, in which mention of the Holy Spirit was connected with the promised redemption. In this view the application which the passage received in the discourse of Jesus was particularly suitable. The words in which Luke reports what followed the introductory text, seem rather like a summary than either the introduction, or part of the discourse, of Jesus. "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." (verse 21).

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- 5. Read Luke 4:22
(1) Luke 3:23 (2) John 6:42
- 6. Read Luke 4:23-24
(1) No reference

Luke 4:22-24

- 22 And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They also asked, "Isn't this the son of Joseph?"
- 23 He said to them, "Surely you will quote me this proverb, 'Physician, cure yourself,' and say, 'Do here in your native place the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.'"
- 24 And he said, "Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place.

Verse 22a:

were amazed at the gracious words -- Some versions have instead: "kept wondering." With the imperfect tense of the verbs, Luke indicates the continuing admiration and astonishment of the people at the charm and eloquence of Jesus. Although the phrase "words of grace" is ordinarily understood in an aesthetic sense, still the close connection with the citation from Isaiah leads some commentators to give it a more spiritual meaning: words proclaiming God's good pleasure. (JBC)

all spoke highly of him -- Some material from Mark is now worked into the account and the transition is not easy. (IB)

Verses 22b-24:

The abrupt change in the attitude of the Nazarenes is best explained by a lapse of time. Luke is now relating a subsequent visit (Mark 6:1-6; Matthew 13:54-58 par.). (JBC)

Isn't this the son of Joseph? -- Luke has already recorded the very clearly virginal

conception (1:26-38) of Jesus, and so he can afford to give the normal reaction of the Nazarenes. Matthew 13:55 has “son of the carpenter,” whereas Mark, which lacks any Infancy Narrative, has the people speak in a way contrary to Jewish custom, “the son of Mary” (6:3). (JBC)

This comment--like its counterpart in Mark 6:3--suggests hostility rather than surprise. (IB)

Verse 23:

[Surely you will quote me this proverb](#) -- Luke purposely employs the future tense, for in Luke’s Gospel Jesus has not yet appeared in Capernaum. After his miracles in this other city of Galilee, the Nazarenes will want to see Jesus (8:19-21); that is, to see some miracles--although like Herod, they lack faith (9:9; 23:8). At this point, Mark (6:5) has one of the boldest statements in the Gospels: “he was not able to perform any miracle there.” The implied reason: because of their unbelief. Evidently, Jesus’ miracles were intended to deepen faith in Messianic salvation and not to exert external force on a person’s freedom. (JBC)

[Physician, cure yourself](#) -- “Charity begins at home”. This is a proverb with equivalents in every age and language. An early third century fragment has a variant reading that has obviously been adapted to fit Luke’s application: “Jesus said: ‘no prophet is acceptable in his own country, and no physician performs cures on those who know him.’” The proverb’s application suggests that the whole narrative was located later in Jesus’ ministry, for Luke has not yet reported any activity at Capernaum. (IB)

Verse 24:

[Amen, I say to you](#) -- Luke usually omits this Semitism; “amen” is a transliterated Hebrew word meaning “true, steadfast.” It is used as an adverb, and the entire phrase always introduces a solemn declaration uttered only by Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels (31 times in Matthew; 13 times in Mark; and 6 times in Luke). (JBC)

This is also material from Mark (Mark 6:4). It has been suggested that verses 22c and 24 might have been missing from the source Luke was employing at this point. The narrative would flow more freely without them. (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

There was such power in each of these “words of grace” that the hearers were spell-bound under their influence. Every eye was fastened upon him with hungry eagerness. For the moment they forgot all else--Who it was that addressed them, even the strangeness of the message which was so unspeakably in contrast to the preaching of the Rabbi or Teacher that had been heard in that synagogue. One can scarcely conceive the impression which the words of Jesus must have produced, when promise and fulfillment, hope and reality, mingled--and wants of the heart, until now unrealized, were awakened, only to be more than satisfied. It was another sphere, another life. Truly, the anointing of the Holy Spirit was on the Prophet, from Whose lips dropped these “words of grace.” If such was the announcement of the Year of God’s Jubilee, what blessings it contained!

The discourse had been spoken, and the breathless silence with which, according to Jewish custom, it had been listened to, gave place to the usual after-sermon hum of an Eastern synagogue. On one point all were agreed: that they were marvelous words of grace, which had proceeded from his mouth. Still the preacher waited, with deep longing of soul, for some question, which would have marked the spiritual application of what He

had spoken. They were indeed making application of the Sermon to the preacher, but in a quite different manner from that to which His discourse had pointed. It was not the fulfillment of the scripture in him, but the circumstance, that such a one as the Son of Joseph, their village carpenter, should have spoken such words, that attracted their attention. Not, as we take it, in a malevolent spirit, but altogether unspiritual, as regarded the effect of Christ's words, did one and another, express wonderment to his neighbor.

They had heard. But already the holy indignation of Him, Whom they only knew as Joseph's son, was kindled. The turn of matters, their very admiration and expectation turned into unspiritual comments which was all so entirely contrary to the character, the mission, and the words of Jesus. No doubt they would next expect, that here in his own city, and the more so since it was his own city, he would do there what they had heard had taken place in Capernaum. In application to the special circumstances, Jesus spoke the age-old Jewish proverb: "Physician, cure yourself." If there is any meaning in truth and principle, if there was any meaning and reality in Christ's mission, and in the discourse he had just spoken, Charity does not begin at home; and "Physician, cure yourself" is not the Gospel for the poor, nor yet is it the preaching of God's Jubilee, but that of the Devil, whose works Jesus had come to destroy. How could he, in his Holy abhorrence and indignation, say this any better than by again repeating, although now with different application, that sad experience: "no prophet is accepted in his own native place." He then pointed to two OT instances of it, whose names and authority were most frequently on Jewish lips. Not they who were "their own," but they who were most receptive in faith--not Israel, but Gentiles, were those most markedly favored in the ministry of Elijah and Elisha.

* * * * *

7. Read Luke 4:25

(1) I Kings 17:1-7

(3) James 5:17

(2) I Kings 18:1

8. Read Luke 4:26

(1) I Kings 17:9

9. Read Luke 4:27

(2) II Kings 5:1-14

10. Read Luke 4:28

Luke 4:25-28

25 Indeed, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the sky was closed for three and a half years and a severe famine spread over the entire land.

26 It was to none of these that Elijah was sent, but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon.

27 Again, there were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet; yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."

28 When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury.

Verses 25-27:

These verses may introduce us to a third visit of Jesus to Nazareth. But they are not only without parallel in Matthew and Mark, but their whole theology is distinctly from Luke. Scholars, therefore, will always suspect here an independent composition by Luke which summarizes the entire work of Jesus. (JBC)

The example of two OT prophets might serve to silence a complaint that Jesus' "mighty works" ought to have been performed in his native village (verse 23), although the parallelism is not complete since Capernaum was presumably a Jewish town. It has little bearing, however, on the observation that "no prophet is acceptable in his own country" (verse 24). The Elijah incident is narrated in I Kings 17:8-24. The statement that "the heaven was shut up three years and six months" is also made in James 5:17-18. According to I Kings 18:1, the duration of the drought was less than three years. In apocalyptic literature "three and a half years" (the half of seven--"a time, and times, and half a time" [Daniel 7:25; Revelation 12:14]) had become the stereotyped period of evil and distress, and this may explain the change in chronology. "Zarephath, in the land of Sidon" is the modern Sarafand, a town on the coast road, midway between Sidon and Tyre. It would be clear to the readers of the Gospel that a woman living there would be Syrophoenician by race. The Elisha story is found in II Kings 5:1-14. Again the point is that a prophet of God ministered to a non-Jew. (IB)

Verse 25:

in the days of Elijah -- Jesus compares himself to Elijah and the drought (I Kings 17-18) and to Elisha and the cure of Naaman (II Kings 5). Like both of these prophets, Jesus too will eventually direct his apostles beyond Judaism to the entire Gentile world. We must accept the comparison as it is intended, for the parallel is not complete. Elijah was not greatly honored at Zarephath, nor was Elisha ever rejected by Israel. Nazareth does not necessarily represent all Israel, nor Capernaum the Gentile country. Clearly implied here is a theology of election. The Gentiles may not be as worthy as the Jews, but God in his mercy has chosen them for his own. (JBC)

three and a half years -- Although I Kings 17:1 announces a three-year drought, Luke, like James 5:17, extends the time to three and a half years. The latter number echoes the classic figure used in apocalyptic literature for the duration of persecution and distress, even the eschatological struggle (Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelations 11:2; 12:6, 14). (JBC)

Summary from LToJC:

As we read the report of Jesus' words, we perceive only dimly that aspect of them which stirred the wrath of His hearers to the utmost, and yet we do understand it. That he should have turned so fully the light upon the Gentiles, and flung its large shadows upon them; that Joseph's son should have taken up this position towards them; that he would make to them spiritual application unto death of his sermon, since they would not make it unto life; it stung them to the quick.

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c. REJECTION OF JESUS
Luke 4:29-30

11. Read Luke 4:29-30
(1) No references

Luke 4:29-30

- 29 They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong.
30 But he passed through the midst of them and went away.

Verses 28-30:

The conclusion of this episode is written in language very similar to the rejection of Stephen (Acts 7:58) and Paul (Acts 13:50). Luke evidently sees universal Church history already taking place in Jesus, for the spirit of Jesus is responsible for whatever happens in the church. (JBC)

In Mark 6:5-6 there is no reference to any overt act of hostility to Jesus. "All in the synagogue were filled with wrath" (verse 28) because the benefits of Jesus' mission were to accrue to others. Modern Nazareth is situated on a steep slope, but changes in topography since the first century A.D. have been such that it is impossible to locate "the brow of the hill" that Luke had in mind, if indeed it was not entirely a literary detail. "Passing through the midst of them" implies that Jesus was miraculously invulnerable to mob violence (cf. John 7:30). (IB)

Placed as it is, at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, the Nazareth story serves as a prelude to the whole of Luke-Acts--to the entire account of the emergence of Christianity as a non-Jewish religion. Many of the main motifs are introduced: the preparation evangelon in the OT; the endowment with the Spirit; the good news to the poor; the proclamation of the messianic age; the hostility of the Jews; and the mission to the Gentiles. The rejection of Jesus by his fellow townsmen prepares the reader for the rejection of Christ by the Sanhedrin, and the rejection of the gospel by the Jewish nation. We are prepared at the beginning of the work for Paul's statement with which it ends: "Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen" (Acts 28:28). (IB)

Verse 29:

[to the brow of the hill](#) -- Nazareth, clinging to a hillside, had several steep slopes from which a man could fall to his death. (JBC)

Verse 30:

[passed through the midst of them and went away](#) -- This does not necessarily imply a miracle. At the decisive moment no Nazarene dared to molest him. Such spasmodic changes of attitude are recorded in many social revolutions. Similar incidents are more frequent in John (John 7:30, 45f.; 8:59), with the theological implication that the hour had not yet come. Only in 9:51 will Luke admit that the days were completed for his "being taken up." (JBC)

Summary from LToJC:

Even on that holy Sabbath, the people could not bear Jesus' presence any longer

and decided he must go out of the city. They thrust him out of the synagogue, and pressed him on out of the city. Some followed and some surrounded him along the road by the brow of the hill on which the city is built. It may have been on the western angle which has been suggested as the site where it occurred. There was an unspoken intent of crowding him over the cliff which rises abruptly about forty feet out of the valley beneath. If the location suggested is the true site where this happened, there is a road here which bifurcates. We can conceive how Jesus, who had up to this time, allowed himself to be almost mechanically pressed onward by the surrounding crowd, now turned, and by that look of commanding majesty, which was the outbreak of his Divine Being, constrained them to halt and give way before him, while unharmed he passed through their midst. So did Israel of old pass through the cleft waves of the sea, which the wonder working rod of Moses had converted into a wall of safety. Jesus then, finally and forever, left his own Nazareth.

* * * * *

d. JESUS RETURNS TO DWELL IN CAPERNAUM

Matthew 4:13-17

Mark 1:15

12. Read Matthew 4:13-17 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference
13. Read Matthew 4:13
(1) John 2:12
14. Read Matthew 4:14
(1) No reference
15. Read Matthew 4:15-16
(1) Isaiah 8:23 (LXX) (2) Isaiah 9:1
16. Read Matthew 4:16
(1) Luke 1:79
17. Read Matthew 4:17
(1) Mark 3:2

Matthew 4:13-17

- 13 He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali,
- 14 that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled:
- 15 "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles,
- 16 the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death light has arisen."

17 From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Verse 13:

[in Capernaum by the sea](#) -- Jesus moved from his own village of Nazareth to the larger city of Capernaum (identified with the ruins Tell Hum near the northern end of the western shore of the Sea of Galilee). In NT times the western shore of the lake was occupied by many busy and prosperous small cities and towns; and we must assume that Jesus wished to reach a wider audience. (JBC)

[in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali](#) -- Matthew notes that Capernaum lay in the old tribal territory of Zebulun and Naphtali; this enables him to adduce to Isaiah 8:23 - 9:1 (LXX 9:1-2). In the passage from Isaiah deliverance of 9:2-6 is first announced to the territory of Galilee, which was detached from the Kingdom of Israel by Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria in 734 B.C. and erected into an Assyrian province. The first part of Israel to experience the destroying wrath of Yahweh shall be the first to hear of his salvation. The quotation follows neither the LXX nor the MT. (JBC)

Matthew anticipates Mark 1:21 and states that Jesus actually "dwelt in Capernaum," which is probably the modern Tell Hum. He defines this as in "the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali" in order to prepare for the quotation which follows. (IB)

Verses 15-16:

The original point of the prophecy (Isaiah 9:1-2) was that even these regions would share in the coming bliss. Matthew uses it to explain why Jesus worked in despised Galilee, rather than Judea. The quotation differs from the LXX, and it may come from an independent Greek version or an oral Targum. "The way of the sea" in Isaiah may have referred to the Mediterranean; here it denotes the region of the Sea of Galilee. "Across the Jordan" is Trans-Jordan, which, like Galilee, was under the tetrarch Herod Antipas. "Galilee" means "circle" or "region"; and "Galilee of the Gentiles" originally meant "region of non-Jews." Many of its residents were forcibly converted to Judaism in the Maccabean period. (IB)

Verse 17:

[kingdom of heaven](#) -- Matthew compresses Mark's summary of the proclamation of Jesus, using the phrase Mark uses to summarize the preaching of John (3:1) without Mark's allusion to the "time" and Mark's call to faith. The typical phrase of Matthew, "kingdom of heaven," appears here instead of Mark's "kingdom of God;" the circumlocution (a circular method of explaining something--an indirect expression) of "heavens" for "God" was a common Jewish manner of speech. Jews of this period avoided the use of the divine name or what were regarded as peculiarly divine titles. The word usually translated "kingdom" is more accurately rendered "reign"; this is the word employed in this commentary, except in a few passages. The word does not designate an area in which power is exercised, but the exercise of power. What "approaches" (or "is arriving") is the manifestation of the supreme power of God, the assertion of his sovereignty. The first response to this is repentance; for sin is a refusal to accept the reign of God. (JBC)

The Greek word translated "repent" basically denotes "change of mind," but in the LXX it often stands for the Hebrew word meaning "to grieve for one's sins."

Repentance is one of the most important of all Jewish doctrines. It involves profound sorrow for sin, restitution so far as possible, and a steadfast resolution not to commit that particular sin again. Such repentance unfailingly brings divine forgiveness without the need of any mediation or ritual act. A man can never be certain, however, that his repentance is perfect unless he successfully resists a second temptation to commit the sin. There is a famous saying of one Jewish Rabbi (Aha; ca. 320 A.D.): "If the Israelites would repent for one day, the Messiah Son of David would come immediately." Jesus' teaching on repentance builds on the foundation of the OT and Judaism. (IB)

The terms "kingdom of heaven" and kingdom of God are not used interchangeably in the Synoptic Gospels. The former translates literally the rabbinical phrase which means "heaven," and is used partly to avoid mentioning the divine name. The OT does not use the exact phrase, but the idea is there (for example, Psalm 145:11-13). Its basic meaning is the "reign" or "sovereignty" of God. The OT thinks of this sovereignty as eternal because God created the world; his reign is present already in so far as he is king of Israel, and it will be manifested perfectly in the future age. Rabbinical thought develops this concept. Man rejected God's kingship in the days of Noah, and from that time onward God was king only in heaven until Abraham, Moses, and the children of Israel accepted his sovereignty. Because Israel disobeyed him, lordship over the world passed to the heathen. Nevertheless, the reign of God is realized whenever a man consciously submits himself to the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Numbers 15:37-41). God's reign will extend to all men in the world to come and will be openly visible to all. Some of the earliest synagogue prayers (for example, the Eighteen Benedictions, and the Kaddish which ends the various sections of Jewish religious services) contain petitions for the coming of the kingdom. (IB)

The kingdom is central in Jesus' teaching. He generally emphasizes its future and miraculous aspects; furthermore, it is "at hand" (literally, "has drawn near"), and the faithful have not long to wait. But he gives the doctrine certain particular emphases: (1) Man must, of course, prepare for the kingdom by moral effort, but it is pre-eminently God's gift (Luke 12:32); after the seed is once sown, God will bring the harvest (Mark 4:1-9 = Matthew 13:1-9; Mark 4:26-29; Matthew 13:31-33). (2) The kingdom is the sum of all gifts and as such is indescribable except through poetry (13:44-46). (3) Although it will come in its complete glory only in the future, it is already beginning to manifest itself in the events connected with Jesus' ministry (12:28 = Luke 11:20; 11:12-13 = Luke 16:16; 13:16-17 = Luke 10:23-24), and it is in the disciples' midst (Luke 17:20-21). In the Lord's Prayer (6:9-13 = Luke 11:2-4) the sanctification of God's name is closely connected with the coming of the kingdom, and 6:10 equates the kingdom with the doing of God's will on earth as it is in heaven. This sense of the dawning of the kingdom, the appearance of its first fruits, the combination of thanksgiving for present bliss with the most poignant expectation of glory in the near future--these features run throughout the whole NT and account for the special quality of its eschatology. (4) Indeed, men can enter the kingdom now (5:20; 18:3; 20:1-16), and the Beatitudes (5:3-11) are intended to describe the character of its members. Conditions of entrance are no longer national or racial, but purely moral and religious. There is a close relation between the kingdom and the group of disciples, and it is not surprising that Matthew tends to equate it with the church (13:47, 52; 16:18-19). (5) Jesus is the herald of the kingdom and he is intimately

involved in its present manifestations. Critics are not agreed as to logical connection between the kingdom of God and the Messiah or Son of man, but the two types of expectation are combined in the Gospels, and in some Jewish writings. (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

Cast out of his own city, Jesus pursued his solitary way towards Capernaum. There, at least, devoted friends and believing disciples would welcome him. There, also, a large draught of souls would fill the Gospel-net. Capernaum would be His Galilean home. Here he would, on the Sabbath-days, preach in that synagogue, of which the good centurion was the builder, and Jairus the chief ruler. These names, and the memories connected with them, are a sufficient comment on the effect of his preaching; that "his word was with power."

In Capernaum, also, was the now believing and devoted household of the court-officer, whose son the Word of Christ, spoken at a distance, had restored to life. Here also, or in the immediate vicinity, was the home of his earliest and closest disciples, the brothers Simon and Andrew, and of James and John, the sons of Zebedee.

From the character of the narrative, and still more from the later call of these four, it would seem that, after the return of Jesus from Judea into Galilee, His disciples had left him, probably in Cana, and returned to their homes and ordinary occupations. They were not yet called to forsake all and follow him--not merely to discipleship, but to fellowship and Apostolate. When he went from Cana to Nazareth, they returned to Capernaum. They knew he was near them. Presently he came; and now his ministry was in their own Capernaum, or in its immediate neighborhood.

Capernaum was not the only place where he taught. Rather it was the center for his traveling and preaching throughout all that district, to preach in its synagogues. Amidst such a ministry of quiet power, chiefly alone and unattended by his disciples, the summer had passed.

18. Read Mark 1:15
(1) Matthew 3:2

Mark 1:15

- 15 "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent -- Cf. Matthew 4:17, "Repent, for the reign of heaven is at hand." By inverting this order and starting with "the appointed time (of God's saving act) is fulfilled," Mark emphasizes the eschatological nature of Jesus' presence in Galilee (cf. Ezekiel 7:12; Daniel 12:4, 9; Zephaniah 1:12; Galatians 4:4; the Dead Sea Scrolls). (JBC)

"The time is fulfilled" can be paralleled from Paul (Galatians 4:4), but it is not specifically Pauline; the idea can be found in the OT (for example, Daniel 7:22), in John (for example, 7:8, Jesus "my time"), and even in Josephus (*Antiquities*. VI. 4. 1), not to mention authors more remote (for example, Herodotus). It was a commonplace of ancient religion generally that the course of history is determined beforehand, at least for crucial affairs or turning points; Jewish apocalyptic carried the idea to an extreme, with

its “weeks” of days or years and its rigid schematization of history. But the idea itself was common, as the OT prophets show, and one need not turn to Paul for its source--Paul himself took it for granted as a generally recognized example of the divine overruling of human events. “The time”, then, means simply the time foreseen by the prophets, the time fixed in God’s foreknowledge: “The time has struck.” “At hand” is the crucial phrase for “realized eschatology.” The Greek verb can scarcely mean “has arrived,” but only “has drawn near;” nevertheless, the kingdom is still approaching, it is drawing ever nearer; that is, it has begun to arrive. There is still time for repentance--but the time is short. The “mighty works” of Jesus, which Mark undoubtedly has in mind, are evidence of its coming, though not of its full arrival--indeed in his own time it had not yet completely come. For these reasons the translation “at hand” is as good as can be made in English. (IB)

“Repent ye”: As in John the Baptist’s preaching (verse 4), so in that of Jesus, repentance -- “turning” from sin, “turning” to the Lord--is its first word of exhortation. The theory that verses 14-15 are Pauline breaks down completely at this point: Paul nowhere stresses repentance. Note that the imperative is plural: Jesus’ prophetic message is addressed, in the first instance, to his whole people. “Believe in the Gospel”; that is, “believe in the good news” sounds like a later Christian admonition, although it is not impossible that Jesus referred to his own proclamation as “good news.” It was clearly different in tone and implication from John the Baptist’s message of coming judgment.

Session 3

Overview from LToJC:

The shorter days of early autumn had come as Jesus passed from Galilee, to what, in the absence of certain evidence, we must be content to call “the unknown feast” in Jerusalem. It was probably either the “Feast of Wood Offering” which took place on the 15th of the Jewish month Abh (in August), when, amidst demonstrations of joy, willing givers brought from all parts of the country the wood required for the service of the altar, or the “Feast of Trumpets” which took place on 1st of the Jewish month Tishri (about the middle of September) and which marked the beginning of the New Civil Year.

The journey of Jesus to that Feast and its results are not mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels because the Judean ministry was the historical thread of John’s record of what Jesus spoke, and it lay beyond the historical standpoint of the Synoptists. Furthermore, this and similar events belonged to the self-manifestation of Jesus, with the corresponding growth of opposition that was consequent upon it. It was the object of John’s Gospel to set forth this growing opposition, and was outside the scope of the more pragmatic record, which the other Gospels had in view.

There may, however, have been other reasons for the Synoptist’s silence. It has already been indicated that, during the summer of Jesus’ first Galilean ministry the disciples had returned to their homes and usual occupations, while Jesus moved about chiefly alone and unattended. This explains the circumstance of a second call, even to His most intimate and closest followers. It also accords best with that gradual development of Jesus’ activity.

The more public activity commenced with the return of Jesus from the “Unknown Feast” in Jerusalem. There he had, in answer to the challenge of the Jewish authorities, for the first time set forth his messianic claims in all their fullness. There, also, he had for the first time encountered that active persecution of which Golgotha was the logical outcome. This Feast, then, was the time of critical decision. Accordingly, as involving the separation from the old state and the commencement of a new condition of things, it was immediately followed by the call of his disciples to a new apostleship. In this view, we can also better understand the briefness of the notices of his first Galilean ministry, and how, after Jesus’ return from that Feast, his teaching became more full, and the display of his miraculous power more constant and public.

It seems only fitting that he should have gone up to that Feast alone and unattended. The narrative of the healing of the impotent man reads so Jewish, that the account of it appears to have been derived by John from a Jew at Jerusalem. It seems implied in the narrative itself, and the marked and exceptional absence of any reference to disciples leads to the obvious conclusion, that they had not been there with Jesus.

If Jesus was alone and unattended at the Feast, some might question from where the narrative was derived of what Jesus said in reply to the challenge of the Jews. The answer naturally suggests itself in that Jesus may, at some later period of his life (perhaps during his last stay in Jerusalem) have communicated to his disciples, or to John himself, the details of what had passed on the first occasion when the Jewish authorities had sought to extinguish his messianic claims in his own blood. If that communication was made when Jesus was about to be offered up, it would also account for what otherwise

might seem a difficulty--the very developed form of expression in which his relation to the Father, and his own office and power, are presented. We can understand how, from the very first, all this should have been laid before the teachers of Israel. But in view of the organic development of Jesus teaching, we could scarcely expect it to have been expressed in such very full terms, until near the close of his ministry.

But here we are anticipating.

* * * * *

2. IN JUDEA

a. CURE ON A SABBATH

John 5:1-18

1. Read John 5:1-18 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference
2. Read John 5:1
(1) John 6:4
3. Read John 5:2
(1) Nehemiah 3:1, 32 (2) Nehemiah 12:39
4. Read John 5:3
(1) No reference
5. Read John 5:4 (Read footnote at bottom of NAB)
(1) No reference
6. Read John 5:5-7
(1) No reference
7. Read John 5:8
(1) Matthew 9:6 (3) Luke 5:24
(2) Mark 2:11 (4) Acts 3:6
8. Read John 5:9
(1) Mark 2:12 (3) John 9:14
(2) Luke 5:25
9. Read John 5:10
(1) Exodus 20:8 (4) Luke 13:10
(2) Jeremiah 17:21-27 (5) Luke 14:1
(3) Mark 3:2

10. Read John 5:11-12
(1) No reference
11. Read John 5:13
(1) Matthew 8:18 (3) Mark 4:36
(2) Matthew 13:36 (4) Mark 7:17
12. Read John 5:14
(1) Ezekiel 18:20 (3) John 9:2
(2) John 8:11
13. Read John 5:15
(1) No reference
14. Read John 5:16
(1) Matthew 12:8 (2) John 7:23
15. Read John 5:17
(1) Ezekiel 20:11
16. Read John 5:18
(1) Genesis 3:5-6 (5) John 8:37 and 40
(2) Wisdom 2:16 (6) John 10:33 and 36
(3) Matthew 26:4 (7) John 14:28
(4) John 7:1 and 25 (8) II Thessalonians 2:4

John 5:1-18

- 1 After this, there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.
- 2 Now there is in Jerusalem at the Sheep (Gate) a pool called in Hebrew Bethesda, with five porticoes.
- 3 In these lay a large number of ill, blind, lame, and crippled.
- 4 [See footnote]
- 5 One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years.
- 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been ill for a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be well?"
- 7 The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; while I am on my way, someone else gets down there before me."
- 8 Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your mat, and walk."
- 9 Immediately the man became well, took up his mat, and walked. Now that day was a sabbath.
- 10 So the Jews said to the man who was cured, "It is the sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to carry your mat."
- 11 He answered them, "The man who made me well told me, 'Take up your mat and walk.'"

- 12 They asked him, "Who is the man who told you, 'Take it up and walk'?"
13 The man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away, since there was a crowd there.
14 After this Jesus found him in the temple area and said to him, "Look, you are well; do not sin any more, so that nothing worse may happen to you."
15 The man went and told the Jews that Jesus was the one who had made him well.
16 Therefore, the Jews began to persecute Jesus because he did this on a sabbath.
17 But Jesus answered them, "My Father is at work until now, so I am at work."
18 For this reason the Jews tried all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath but he also called God his own father, making himself equal to God.

From JBC:

The prologue themes of "light and "life" are continually stressed by John. The first stage of this development centers around a Sabbath controversy, the reality of which in the life of Jesus is more than amply confirmed by the frequent Synoptic references (Mark 2:23ff. par.). The scene is laid in Jerusalem. Although John no longer calls it to our attention explicitly, this account of the healing of the impotent man continues the series of special "signs" that manifest Jesus' role as life-giver. Once again Jesus' word is sufficient to do what the "waters of Judaism" cannot.

Verse 1:

[a feast of the Jews](#) -- John doesn't identify the feast; its importance is secondary to what took place at that time. (JBC)

"A feast of the Jews" is indefinite and contrary to John's usage in mentioning these festivals (cf. 2:23; 6:4; 7:2; 11:55; 13:1). Evidence from the manuscripts is divided between this reading and "the feast of the Jews." If the latter reading is correct, and if chapter 5 is in its right position, then the feast would mean the feast of Tabernacles [the end of September]. Pentecost is more likely [the beginning of June]. (IB)

The journey to Jerusalem and the events described in this chapter are thought by many scholars to find their proper order after the events recorded in chapter 6 (as does JBC). In that case the feast referred to here was the Passover (cf. 6:4) [beginning of May]. (IB)

Verses 2-5:

The right text is probably "Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep pool [a place] called in Aramaic Bethesda, having five porticoes." "Sheep gate" is suggested by Nehemiah 3:1, 32; 12:39. But the pool would not be called a house ("market" in some versions). Recent excavations below the ruins of the basilica of St. Anne, a little to the north of the temple site, have disclosed a large trapezium-shaped double pool divided in the middle by a broad wall. This corresponds to the description--given by Origen early in the 3rd century A.D., a century later by the Bordeaux Pilgrim and by Cyril of Jerusalem--of the sheep pool with four porticoes surrounding it and a fifth in the middle. Remains of the pillars and balustrades further support the identification, and votive inscriptions suggest that ancient superstition ascribed healing virtue to the water. The early variant "Bethzatha" is probably due to confusion with Bethzetha, the name of the northern suburb, according to Josephus Jewish War II. 15. 5; 19. 4. 2; V. 4.2.; 5.8. Bethsaida is perhaps a corruption due to confusion with the well-known town in Galilee. (IB)

After verse 3 words are added in some later and less reliable manuscripts, preserving a fragment of folklore. The disturbance of the water caused by an intermittent spring substituted an angel, and healing virtue was supposed to cure the first to bathe in the pool after this movement of the water. The comment in verse 4 was inserted later to explain the man's answer in verse 7. (IB)

Verse 2:

the Sheep (Gate) a pool -- This appears to be the best translation; the pool received its name from its proximity to the Sheep Gate, known as such from OT times (Nehemiah 3:1; 12:39), situated north of the Temple area. (JBC)

called in Hebrew -- Here and elsewhere in the NT, "Aramaic" is probably meant; that is, the common language spoken by Palestinian Jews. (JBC)

Bethesda -- Other readings, equally well attested, are "Bethzatha," and "Bethsaida." Bethzatha seems to have been the name of the northeast section of Jerusalem without the walls; it could have given its name to the place in question (or, conversely, it could have received its name from that place). Bethsaida may have been introduced into the manuscripts by confusing it with Bethsaida of Galilee (1:44). Bethesda is often said to mean "house of mercy," as a name given to a building erected by a pool whose waters were said to have curative effects (5:7). But the name really had a quite different meaning; its Semitic form has been recovered in the copper scroll of the Dead Sea Scrolls, "house of the double gusher", a name that referred to the springs that fed the double pool. John's purpose in giving the "Hebrew" name is to qualify the pool as "water of Judaism" (cf. 2:6; 4:12). (JBC)

five porticoes -- John probably intends no symbolism by this number. The Sheep Pool has been identified with the double pool that now lies near the Church of St. Anne in Jerusalem: the trapezoidal pool was edged on four sides by porticoes; a fifth transected it, dividing it into two parts. (JBC)

Verse 3:

The authentic text merely stated that the porticoes were crowded with the sick. The "received text" for verses 3b-4 adds (with variations): "... waiting for the moving of the water. For the angel of the Lord went down into the pool from time to time and stirred up the water; and whoever was first to step in after the stirring of the water became healed, no matter what disease he had." The added words are missing in the oldest and most reliable manuscripts, and the language is not that of John. There can hardly be any doubt that we have in them a later addition devised to explain verse 7. (JBC)

Verses 5-6:

It is not said, of course, that the man who had been sick for 38 years had spent all this time at the pool; however, verse 7 presupposes that he had been there for some time. John does not explain the basis on which Jesus singled out this man; he is interested only in the miracle as a sign of Jesus' power. (JBC)

Verses 6-16:

The account of the cure has points of resemblance with the story of the paralytic in Mark 2:1-12. The command, "Rise, take up your pallet, and walk", and the result, "He took up his pallet and walked," are substantially common to both incidents. But whereas in Mark's story it was the vicarious faith of the bearers which moved Jesus to his healing act, the lame man at Bethsaida was appealed to. "Do you want to be healed?" Possibly

another connection is to be found in relation between the physical and spiritual evil in both stories. In Mark, Jesus says to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." In John's story Jesus says afterward, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse befall you" (verse 14). On the other hand, in Mark's story the paralytic was not healed on the Sabbath. The dispute on that question arose from the plucking of the ears of corn and the healing of the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath (Mark 2:23 - 3:6). (IB)

The question in verse 6 was addressed to a cripple who after 38 years might well have lost the desire to be sound. The warning in verse 14 raises a difficult question. Later on (9:3) Jesus rejects the disciples' suggestion that a man's blindness was due to his parent's sin, although as he was born blind, his own sin could not be the cause (cf. Luke 13:1-5). Possibly the Evangelist regards this as an instance of the insight of divine knowledge (cf. 1:42, 48; 2:24 - 3:2; 4:19, 29, 39), tracing the man's physical infirmity to his past sin. The "pallet" was the poor man's bed, a light and flexible mat which could easily be rolled up and carried. It was this act which provoked the censure of the Jews (that is, the strict Pharisees who opposed Jesus), who gave a strict interpretation to Jeremiah 17:21; Nehemiah 13:19. In the Mishnah there is a list of 39 works forbidden on the Sabbath. Here it is allowed to carry a living man on a couch, since the couch is secondary; that is, the bed is regarded as necessary for a man's conveyance. But to carry the bed itself is not permissible. When the Jews discovered that Jesus was responsible for the man's breach of the Sabbath law, they turned their attack upon him. The rabbis allowed necessary works of mercy on the Sabbath, but the critics of Jesus felt that a man who had waited 38 years for a cure might easily have waited until the following day (see on 7:23). A different translation of verse 16 might be: "This was why the Jews used to persecute Jesus, because he did things like this on the Sabbath." (IB)

Verse 7:

With verses 3b-4 excised as unauthentic, we have no explanation from the Evangelist of the efficacy popularly ascribed to the water. Evidently when the water bubbled, when the intermittent underground spring that fed the pool became more active, it was thought to be especially curative. Doubtless this condition would last only for a short while so that those in charge of the building would surely have been forced to regulate the crowds, possibly allowing only one person to enter the water. Or it may have been thought that the water was then effective only for one person. (JBC)

Verses 8-9:

With a word Jesus does for the man what the water had been unable to do. Without referring to the supposed curative value of the water, he completely heals the man of his infirmity. (JBC)

[Now that day was a Sabbath](#) -- This is the reason that precipitates controversy with the Jewish leaders, as it does when Jesus heals the blind man (9:14). (JBC)

Verses 10-11:

A specific rabbinical law prohibited the carrying of one's bed on the Sabbath. The complaint of the Jewish leaders is not yet against Jesus, but against the action of the man who had been cured. His justification is implicit in his reply: If Jesus could perform this cure, surely it was proper to obey his command in this matter. (JBC)

Verses 12-13:

The personality of the healed man does not emerge in this story. Nothing at all is

said concerning his attitude toward Jesus. (JBC)

Verse 14:

the temple area -- A place of popular resort; this passage conveys that Jesus met the man casually there on a later occasion. Apparently this time Jesus was with his disciples or the man identified him by other means (verse 15). (JBC)

do not sin any more -- Jesus does not say that the man's sins were responsible for his affliction (cf. Luke 13:1-4). The "something worse" that can happen doubtless refers to the judgment of God. (JBC)

Verse 15:

The man probably acted in good faith; he was simply answering the question that he had been asked in verse 12. (JBC)

Verse 16:

As in the Synoptic tradition, Jesus' attitude toward the fulfillment of the Sabbath obligation becomes the initial cause of the Jewish leaders' hostility. The way in which John has arranged the following verses indicates that he did not attempt to report any specific conversation but that instead he summarized what was brought out on this subject in various controversies. (JBC)

Verse 17:

My Father is at work until now -- The statement presupposes the background of rabbinical speculation on the matter of God. It was recognized that the anthropomorphism in the Creation Account of Genesis 2:2f. according to which God "rested" on the Sabbath could not be taken to mean a literal cessation of God's creative action, without which the world would cease to exist. Just as the Father is not actually inhibited by the Sabbath law, says Jesus, neither is the Son. This statement corresponds to the Synoptics declaration that the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath (Mark 2:12 par.) (JBC)

It is clear from Mark 3:1-6 and Luke 14:1-6 that this (verse 16) was a constant ground of complaint against Jesus, whose principle of action is stated here: "My Father is working still, and I am working." The point of this reply lies in its relation to contemporary Jewish teaching. The Sabbath rest was based upon the divine example (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:11; 31:17). Yet it was recognized that the living God must still be active. Philo wrote in the 1st century A.D.: "For God never leaves off making, but even as it is the property of fire to burn and of snow to chill, so it is the property of God to make; nay more so by far, inasmuch as He is to all besides the source of action. Excellently, moreover, does Moses say 'caused to rest' not 'rested'; for He causes to rest that which, though actually not in operation, is apparently making, but He Himself never ceases making." To reconcile the thought of continuous divine activity with the texts in the Pentateuch the rabbis discriminated between God's work as creator and as judge. He rests from physical work on the Sabbath, but is externally active in works of judgment, condemning the wicked and conferring life. The answer of Jesus is that such works of healing are part of his mission as giver of life in fulfillment of the Father's will. The defense of works of healing on the Sabbath is contained in the argument of 7:15-24, which may originally have followed immediately after chapter 5. Meanwhile, the Jews fasten upon the blasphemous claim to equality with God (verse 18). (IB)

Verse 18:

Jesus' opponents correctly interpreted this statement as his claim to be the Son of the Father in a unique sense. In identifying his work with that of God, he makes himself equal of God. From their monotheistic viewpoint this could only imply a dualism in deity. (JBC)

Summary and Overview from LToJC:

The narrative transports us at once to what seems to have been a well-known locality in Jerusalem. In the five porches surrounding this pool lay a great multitude of the impotent, in anxious hope of a miraculous cure. The popular superstitions, which gave rise to what we would regard as a peculiarly painful exhibition of human misery of body and soul, is strictly true to the times and the people. The popular idea was, that an angel descended into the water, causing it to bubble up, and then only the first one who stepped into the pool would be cured. Since only one person could obtain benefit, we can imagine the lamentations of the "many" who would, perhaps, day by day, be disappointed in their hopes. This bubbling up of the water was, of course, due not to supernatural but physical causes. It is scarcely necessary to say that the Gospel-narrative does not ascribe this "troubling of the waters" to angelic agency, nor does it endorse the belief, that only the first who afterward entered the pool, could be healed. This was evidently the belief of the impotent man, as well as all the waiting multitude. The words in verse 4, and perhaps, also, the last clause of verse 3 are admittedly an interpolation.

Jewish belief at that time did, however, attach this type of agency to angels. It even localized special angels to springs and rivers. That such healing might actually occur in the circumstances, no one who has read the accounts of pilgrimages to places of miraculous cure would be prepared to deny. Neither could we deny the healing of those who were under the influence of a firm expectancy on the imagination, especially in diseases which have their origin in the nervous system. What the man's disease was is not told to us; however, it is quite possible that all who went to the pool had one common source to their illness--the common source being in the nervous system.

With all reverence, we can in some measure understand, what feelings must have stirred the heart of Jesus, in view of this suffering, waiting multitude. One might wonder why he went into those five porches, since he had neither disease to cure, nor a cry for help had come to him from those who looked for relief. It is certain that he wouldn't have gone there from any sense of curiosity. In all probability, he may have longed to pass from the glitter and unreality of the Temple, or from those who occupied the seat of Moses in their academies, to what was the atmosphere of his life on earth, his real work, among that suffering, ignorant multitude which, in its sorrow, raised a piteous, longing cry for help where it had been misdirected to seek it.

We can also perceive the deep internal connection between Jesus' miracle of healing "the impotent man" and the address of mingled sadness and severity, in which he afterwards set before the masters in Israel the one fundamental truth in all things. He had been in the Temple at the Feast; and of necessity, he had been in contact with the great ones when he was in the Temple. What a stifling atmosphere there of glitter and unreality. What did he have in common with those who received glory from each other, but did not seek the glory that comes solely from God? How could such men believe? The first meaning, and the object of his life and work, was as entirely different from their aims and perceptions, as were the respective springs of their inner being. They clung and

appealed to Moses; to Moses, whose successors they claimed to be. Their elaborate searching and sifting of the Law in the hope that, by a subtle analysis of its every particle and letter, by inferences from, and a careful drawing of a prohibitive hedge around its letter, they would possess themselves of eternal life. Utterly self-deceived and far from the truth in their elaborate attempts to outdo each other, in local ingenuity, they would, while rejecting the Messiah sent from God, at last become the victims of a coarse Messianic imposter (verses 40-43). All the lessons of their past miraculous history had been utterly lost on them. They saw only the letter--only the outward. They had no perception of the unheard voice of the Father, or the unheard voice of the prophets, or even the voice of John the Baptist. They heard, but did not perceive it--just as, in increasing measure, Jesus' sayings and doings, and the Father and his testimony were not perceived. It was all utterly mistaken and guilty perversion--their elaborate trifling with the most sacred things, while around them were suffering, perishing men, stretching "lame hands" into emptiness, and wailing out their mistaken hopes into the eternal silence.

While they were discussing the niceties of what constituted labor on a Sabbath, multitudes of them who labored and were heavy laden were left to perish in their ignorance. That was the Sabbath, and the God of the Sabbath of Pharisaism. But the God who always worked in love, Whose rest was to give rest, Whose Sabbath it was to remove burdens, was his Father. He knew Him; He saw His working; He was in fellowship of love, of work, and of power with him. He had come to give life, to bring life, to be life--because he had life; life in its fullest sense.

Two pictures must have been present to his mind. On the one side was a multitude whose sufferings and false expectations arose with a wail of pain; then on the other side was the neighboring Temple, with its priesthood and teachers who, in their self-seeking and the trifling of their religious externalism, neither understood, heard, nor would have cared for such a cry. Now that Israel's Messiah had at last come, what would we expect him to have done? Surely not to preach controversial or reformatory doctrines; but rather to do, if it were in him, and in doing to speak. In this the Gospel-narrative proves itself true, by telling what he did, what alone would be true in a Messiah, the Son of God. That power went forth from him always, and to all, is absolutely necessary, if He was the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

The waters had not yet been "troubled," when he stood among that multitude of sufferers and their attendant friends. It was in these breathless moments of the intense suspense of expectancy, when every eye was fixed on the pool, that the eye of Jesus searched for the most wretched object among them all. In him, as a typical case, could he best do and teach that for which he had come. This "impotent" man, for 38 years a hopeless sufferer, without attendant or friend among those whom misery (in this also the true outcome of sin) made so intensely selfish, and whose sickness was really the consequence of his sin, and not merely in the sense which the Jews attached to it--this now seemed to be the fittest object for power and grace. For, most important in this account is the entire spontaneity of Jesus' help. It is idle to speak either of faith or of receptiveness on the man's part. The essence of the whole lies in the utter absence of both. Jesus' query to the man "Do you want to be well?", with which he drew the man's attention to himself was only to probe and lay bare his misery. Then power issued from

the words Christ spoke-- "Rise"-- and the man became whole again. Even if it was a Sabbath, he was to leave with his bed.

The waters had not been troubled, and the healing had been unseen. The healed man, scarcely conscious of what had passed, had gathered himself up and rolled together his pallet to hasten after him, but Jesus had already withdrawn. In that multitude, all were thinking only of their own sorrows and wants, he had come and gone unobserved. But they all now knew and observed this miracle of healing, as they saw this unbefriended and most wretched of them all healed, without the troubling of waters or first immersion in them. Jesus did that which he said He would do.

It was the holy Sabbath, and he carried his bed on that day. If he remembered that it was the Sabbath, on which it was unlawful to carry forth anything--a burden, he would not be conscious that it was a burden, or that he had any burden; instead he would have been very conscious that he, who had made him whole, had bid him to take up his bed and walk. His healing had come about from the moment the word "Rise" had left Jesus' mouth. That was enough for him. And in this lay the beginning and root of his inward healing. Here was simple trust, unquestioning obedience to the unseen, unknown, but real savior. For he believed him, and therefore he trusted in him, that he must be right; and so, trusting without questioning he obeyed.

From Bethesda he left carrying home his burden, and the Jews saw him performing this "labor." This carrying of the bed was an infringement of the Sabbath law, as interpreted by traditionalism. It was this external infringement which they saw, and nothing else. They wanted to know who had commanded him to carry his bed on the Sabbath. They didn't ask who it was that had cured him.

It could not have been long after this that the healed man and Jesus met in the Temple. What he then said to him, completed the inward healing. On the ground of his having been healed, let him be whole. As he trusted and obeyed Jesus in the outward cure, so let him now inwardly and morally trust and obey. The healed man now knew to whom he owed faith, gratitude, and trust of obedience; and the consequences of this knowledge must have been incalculable. It would make him a disciple in the truest sense.

Now Jesus must speak it out in clear, open words, what was the hidden inward meaning of this miracle. It was the bitter hatred of his persecutors which gave him the opportunity. The first bursting forth of his messianic mission and character had come in that Temple when he realized it was His Father's house at the age of twelve, and that his life was about his Father's business. These thoughts were re-kindled when he sought to purge it in order that it might be a House of Prayer. Now, once more in that House, it was the consciousness about God as His Father, and His Life as the business of His Father, which furnished the answer to the angry invectives about His breach of the Sabbath-law. The Father's Sabbath was His, the Father worked still and He worked; the Father's work and His were the same; He was the Son of the Father. And in this He also taught, what the Jews had never understood, the true meaning of the Sabbath-law, by emphasizing that which was the fundamental thought of the Sabbath--The reason the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it was not for the rest of inactivity, but of blessing and hallowing.

It was not his whole meaning, but only this one point, that he claimed to be equal with God, of which they took exception. Because he had raised that question, of his

equality with God, for this he was taken to task by the Masters in Israel.

What most impresses us with this account, is the majestic grandeur of Christ' self-consciousness in the presence of his enemies, and still he has the tone of pitying sadness for them which pervades his discourse. The time of the judgment of silence had not yet come. For the present the majesty of his bearing overawed them, and Christ could pass unharmed from among them. So ended that day in Jerusalem. With this inward separation, and the gathering of hostile parties closes the first and begins the second stage of Christ's ministry.

* * * * *

b. THE WORK OF THE SON

John 5:19-30

17. Read John 5:19-30 entirely through one time.
 - (1) No reference
18. Read John 5:19
 - (1) John 3:34
 - (2) John 8:26
 - (3) John 12:49
 - (4) John 9:4
 - (5) John 10:30
19. Read John 5:20
 - (1) John 3:35
20. Read John 5:21
 - (1) Deuteronomy 32:39
 - (2) I Samuel 2:6
 - (3) II Kings 5:7
 - (4) Tobit 13:2
 - (5) Wisdom 16:3
 - (6) Isaiah 26:19
 - (7) Daniel 7:10 and 13
 - (8) Daniel 12:2
 - (9) John 11:25
 - (10) Romans 4:17
 - (11) II Corinthians 1:9
21. Read John 5:22
 - (1) Acts 10:42
 - (2) Acts 17:31
22. Read John 5:23
 - (1) No reference
23. Read John 5:24
 - (1) John 3:18
 - (2) John 8:51
 - (3) I John 3:14
24. Read John 5:25
 - (1) John 5:28
 - (4) Ephesians 2:1

- | | | | |
|-----|---------------|-----|----------------|
| (2) | John 8:51 | (5) | Ephesians 5:14 |
| (3) | John 11:25-26 | (6) | Revelation 3:1 |
25. Read John 5:26
 (1) John 1:4
- (2) I John 5:11
26. Read John 5:27
 (1) Daniel 7:13 and 22
 (2) Matthew 25:31
- (3) Luke 21:36
 (4) John 5:22
27. Read John 5:28
 (1) John 11:33
28. Read John 5:29
 (1) Daniel 12:2
 (2) Matthew 16:27
 (3) Matthew 25:46
- (4) Acts 24:15
 (5) II Corinthians 5:10
29. Read John 5:30
 (1) John 6:38

John 5:19-30

- 19 Jesus answered and said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, a son cannot do anything on his own, but only what he sees his father doing; for what he does, his son will do also.
- 20 For the Father loves his Son and shows him everything that he himself does, and he will show him greater works than these, so that you may be amazed.
- 21 For just as the Father raises the dead and gives life, so also does the Son give life to whomever he wishes.
- 22 Nor does the Father judge anyone, but he has given all judgment to his Son,
- 23 so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.
- 24 Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and will not come to condemnation, but has passed from death to life.
- 25 Amen, amen, I say to you, the hour is coming and is now here when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.
- 26 For just as the Father has life in himself, so also he gave to his Son the possession of life in himself.
- 27 And he gave him power to exercise judgment, because he is the Son of Man.
- 28 Do not be amazed at this, because the hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice
- 29 and will come out, those who have done good deeds to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked deeds to the resurrection of condemnation.
- 30 "I cannot do anything on my own; I judge as I hear, and my judgment is just,

because I do not seek my own will but the will of the one who sent me.

From IB:

To the charge made by the Jews against him in verse 18, Jesus makes a formal reply. His words had been misinterpreted as a claim to independence of God, for that is the meaning of the rabbinical phrase “making himself equal with God.” The Pharisees acknowledged God as Father of his people, and, in a creative sense, of all men. For any man to claim personal divine sonship was to set himself above God’s law and to repeat the arrogance of the Seleucid kings and Roman emperors. The only possible relationship of the pious to God was unswerving obedience to the written law. (IB)

Verses 19-23:

“The Son” does not claim independence, but derives all his authority from “the Father,” whose example he follows and whose purpose he carries out (cf. 3:35). His actions are not those of a rebellious son, but display the Father’s love in revealing to him his own actions. The deed (verses 5-9) at which they “marvel” (7:21) will be surpassed by even greater works in which his observers will see further evidence of the Father’s continued activity. This is especially shown in his action as judge, pronouncing sentence upon men, but also in withholding doom by preserving and conferring life (verse 21). In delegating authority to the Son, the Father allows him to give “life to whom he will.” Yet this does not mean the arbitrary exercise of power by “the Son,” but that “the Son” is to receive the same “honor” as “the Father” while he is exercising his delegated authority in the Father’s name and according to his purpose. Those who dishonor the “Son” by disputing his right to dispense this saving strength to enfeebled bodies and inert souls are dishonoring the “Father.” This is the function of the eschatological judge. Cf. Enoch 69:27: “And he sat on the throne of his glory, And the sum of judgment was given unto the Son of man.” (IB)

Verse 19:

[a son cannot do anything on his own, but only what he sees his father doing](#) -- The implication of subordination here should not be removed by undertaking Jesus’ words to refer only to his human nature. To do so, would miss a fine point of John’s Christology. Rather, Jesus is insisting on an absolute harmony of activity between Father and Son, which, of course, radically demands an identity of nature; the same process is used in 16:12ff. to relate the Holy Spirit to the Son. But throughout this Gospel we never find the Trinity treated as a thesis of abstract theology; it is always approached from the standpoint of its functional relevance to salvation. From this standpoint the Son--who is both God and Man--is in the world to do the work of the Father and only the work of the Father, to dispense to men the life that is the Father’s gift through the Son (5:26ff.); the role of the Son in salvation is to do the will of the Father (4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 7:16f.; 8:28). Later Christian theology will avoid any inference of superiority of one Person in the Trinity to another and will speak of all actions as common to all the Persons; that is, actions that do not involve the internal Trinitarian relationship itself. John does not contradict this doctrine, but neither does he approach it from this detached viewpoint. For Jesus to have said baldly to the Jews that he was “equal to God” would have confirmed them in their conclusion that he was speaking about two Gods. (JBC)

Verse 20:

The principle of this community of activity between Father and Son is love; just as love is also the principle of the activity of the Spirit as sanctifier, a prolongation of the shared life of the Trinity (cf. 14:16, 21). (JBC)

[greater works than these](#) -- In context, the reference is to works greater than that which has just been described, the restoration of health to the man at the pool. (JBC)

Verse 21:

One of these greater works that will be an exercise of the Son's divine power will be the raising of the dead to life. This means not only the final resurrection of which the resurrection of Christ is the principle (cf. I Corinthians 15:20ff.), but the gift of new life in the here and now, the life of grace that is the beginning of the life of glory (cf. 11:25f.). (JBC)

Verse 22:

Another work of the Son is that of judgment, a divine privilege that the Father has "given" him (cf. 3:35). Again it is brought out (cf. 3:18) that judgment takes place not only at the end of time but in the here and now, on the basis of acceptance or rejection of Christ. (JBC)

Verse 24:

The conception of life and judgment as "realized eschatology" is brought out in this repetition. (JBC)

The coming age is already present. The criterion is the kind of response made by men to the revealer of God, who is also commissioned by him to execute judgment. Jesus now changes from the third to the first person. "He who hears my word and believes in him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." Here we listen to the Evangelist's "realized eschatology." The powers of the coming age are in some sense already in occupation. In Jesus Christ, the revealer, the crucial test is found. By the coming of the Logos, "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (1:14), men are given the opportunity of listening to a human voice which yet speaks the message that comes from God. Those who receive that message believe the King who sent the revealer. They thus enter into the kingdom of God, they share in the life eternal, and this is transition "from death to life," from the realm of the prince of this world (14:30) into "the inheritance of the saints in light," from "the dominion of darkness" into "the kingdom of his beloved Son" (Colossians 1:12-13). (IB)

Verses 25-29:

In these verses realized and futuristic eschatology are mingled. "The hour is coming, and now is" introduces a statement about the result of the coming of the Son of God, who is already present as the revealer and judge. The spiritually dead--those who live the unreal life of "the world," which "is in the power of the evil one" (I John 5:19)--will now "hear the voice" of God's authority, and those who attend to that voice will receive that power to live the real life which issues from the Son out of that endowment of essential life (life in himself) which the Father has granted him. He is to hold a judicial inquest immediately (execute judgment) under the authority which the Father has given to him in virtue of his identity in experience and trial with his fellow man--that is, in virtue of all that is involved in his title "Son of man" (the absence of the Greek article emphasizes quality rather than title). This present and spiritual awakening is a foreshadow and foretaste of that general and final judgment when the dead will hear the

voice that summons them for rising to fullness of life; also those whose evil practices fit them for condemnation (cf. Matthew 25:31-46). This is an echo of the futuristic eschatology which dominated the primitive thought of the church. The judgment which is being formed by man's present attitude to Christ will be manifested in the great event with which the present order will be brought at last to its end. (IB)

Verse 25:

This verse also appears to have the same realized eschatology (cf. verse 28): "The dead" are those who were spiritually dead, but have accepted Jesus' word of life and now live. (JBC)

[the hour is coming and is now here](#) -- Christ's triumph over sin and death is a future event (cf. verse 28f.; I Corinthians 15:24ff.), but it is also one that has already taken place in principle (cf. Colossians 1:13f.). (JBC)

Verse 26:

Although Christ has shared the life of God from all eternity (cf. 1:1), he brings this life into the world as the gift of the Father whom he reveals to men (cf. 1:4). Therefore the divine life that he is to communicate to men has first been communicated by the Father to the Son. (JBC)

Verse 27:

This verse resumes the thought of verse 22. (JBC)

[because he is the Son of Man](#) -- We are never allowed to forget that the eternal Word is our Redeemer and Judge precisely in his incarnate state and in his role as mediator endowed with glory, power, and kingship (Daniel 7:14). (JBC)

Verses 28-29:

Neither is the common NT doctrine of futurist eschatology to be minimized. The final judgment will be the consummation of Christ's work: The just will rise to eternal life and the evil to damnation, each being judged according to his works (cf. Romans 2:5-10). (JBC)

Verse 30:

Jesus sums up the foregoing teaching about judgment: His judgment is true because in it he is doing the work of the Father. (JBC)

The passage of verses 30-47 in the self-defense put upon the lips of Jesus, reverts to the claim made in verse 19. The "judgment" by Jesus is valid because the Father has invested him with divine authority; it "is just" because his loyalty to the Father's will rules out any possibility of impulsive behavior. Next the question of "witness" is raised. Witness by itself is inadmissible (as the Jews urge later on in 8:13). "Another who bears witness to me" is the Father (verse 32; see verses 34, 37). This first witness is internal. It is not of such a nature that the Jews can receive it, for it is invisible; but it is the consciousness of divine revelation in the heart of the Son. Next there was the testimony of John the Baptist. Then there was the evidential value of the works which the Father enabled the Son to do (cf. 3:2, "No one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him"). Finally, there is the testimony of the Scriptures, those sacred writings to which the Jews appeal, but which condemn their attitude of unbelief and self-seeking. (IB)

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c. WITNESSES TO JESUS

John 5:31-40

30. Read John 5:31-40 entirely through one time
(1) No reference
31. Read John 5:31-32
(1) John 8:13-14 and 18
32. Read John 5:33
(1) Matthew 11:10-11 (2) John 1:19-27
33. Read John 5:34
(1) I John 5:9
34. Read John 5:35
(1) Psalm 132:17 (3) John 1:8
(2) Sirach 48:1
35. Read John 5:36
(1) John 10:25
36. Read John 5:37
(1) Deuteronomy 4:12 and 15 (3) I John 5:9
(2) John 8:18
37. Read John 5:38
(1) I John 2:14
38. Read John 5:39
(1) Luke 24:27 and 44 (4) John 20:9
(2) John 12:16 (5) I Peter 1:10
(3) John 19:28
39. Read John 5:40
(1) No reference

John 5:31-40

- 31 "If I testify on my own behalf, my testimony cannot be verified.
32 But there is another who testifies on my behalf, and I know that the testimony he
gives on my behalf is true.
33 You sent emissaries to John, and he testified to the truth.
34 I do not accept testimony from a human being, but I say this so that you may be
saved.

- 35 He was a burning and shining lamp, and for a while you were content to rejoice in his light.
- 36 But I have testimony greater than John's. The works that the Father gave me to accomplish, these works that I perform testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me.
- 37 Moreover, the Father who sent me has testified on my behalf. But you have never heard his voice nor seen his form,
- 38 and you do not have his word remaining in you, because you do not believe in the one whom he has sent.
- 39 You search the scriptures, because you think you have eternal life through them; even they testify on my behalf.
- 40 But you do not want to come to me to have life.

The assertion in the previous verses now requires a justification. Here we encounter John's theme of testimony. (JBC)

Verse 31:

Jesus accepts the general principle in human jurisprudence: A man is not to be taken simply at his own word; he needs the testimony of others. (JBC)

Verse 32:

Jesus has such a witness, whose testimony he will reveal in a moment (verses 36ff.). (JBC)

Verses 33-35:

The testimony of this witness is greater than that of the Baptist (1:7). The Baptist's testimony was quite valid; although he was not the light (1:8), he was a lamp illuminating the darkness, pointing to the true light (Psalm 132:17), and the Jews themselves must testify that John had been accredited among them as a prophet, a voice of God (cf. 1:19; Mark 1:5; Matthew 3:5; 11:7; 21:26). Still, valuable though it might be, this is not the testimony to which Jesus appeals. (JBC)

Verse 36:

Jesus' witness is the Father himself: The works that he performs, both his words of life and the deeds that he does, which are the Father's gift to him (verse 20), manifestly show that he has been sent by God (cf. 14:11). (JBC)

Verse 37:

The works, however, remain only indirect testimony. (JBC)

the Father who sent me has testified on my behalf -- Jesus refers to the interior testimony God gives to those who have true faith (cf. I John 5:9f.; Romans 8:16). (JBC)

his voice -- In Jesus' words the voice of God is discerned by those who are responsive to God's grace; by contrast, those now listening to him by their disbelief are blind and "have not seen what he is like" (cf. 1:18). (JBC)

Verse 38:

you do not have his word remaining in you -- This repeats the idea of the preceding verse. However, John probably intends a subtler significance by his choice of words to reproduce our Lord's thought: The "enduring word" of God not possessed by the disbeliever contrasts with the Incarnate Word who abides with his disciples (cf. 1:39; 15:3). (JBC)

Verse 39:

The verb “search” is probably indicative (indicating what they do) rather than imperative (suggesting that they make a “search”) (JBC)

You search the scriptures, because you think you have eternal life through them --
The OT scriptures, however, could only lead to Jesus (cf. Galatians 3:24), in whom alone life is to be found (cf. verses 21, 26; Galatians 3:24). (JBC)

even they testify on my behalf -- Rightly used, the Scriptures would not stand in the way but would rather lead the believer from themselves to Christ. (JBC)

Verse 40:

This verse contains the transition from the question of testimony to the subject of the final verses of this section--a subject that was actual both for Jesus and for the early church; the unbelief of the Jews (cf. 12:37ff.). The point is made at the outset that this incredulity on the part of the Jewish leaders was willful. (JBC)

From IB:

The inadmissibility of such “witness” is laid down in several rabbinical sayings. “I know that the testimony which he bears to me is true.” There is a variant reading, “you know.” This was a correction made by a scribe who thought that the reference was to the Baptist, whose answer to those who were sent to him is given in 1:19-28. “You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth I say this that you may be saved;” cf. 1:6-7: “John ... came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him ...” Verse 35 would be better rendered, “He was that burning and shining lamp,” that is, the one man who deserves to be called “Elijah” who must “come first” (Mark 9:11-13). Cf. Ecclesiasticus 48:1: “Also there arose Elijah the prophet as fire, And his word burned like a torch.” Throughout the Gospel Jesus appeals to his “works” (verse 36) as evidence of his divine mission (cf. 10:25, 38; 14:11; 15:24), even though a belief resting upon these “signs” is inferior to that which springs from insight into his person and message (cf. 14:11; 20:29). The same claim of Jesus is attested in the early collection of sayings known as Q (cf. Matthew 11:2-6, 20-24; 12:28; Luke 7:18-23; 10:13-15; 11:20). The reproach of Jesus (verse 37) is not that his critics have never seen the invisible God (cf. 1:18; 3:13; 6:46), but that (verse 38) they have not appropriated his message spoken of old by seer and prophet. They have ransacked the Scriptures (verse 39), but missed their inner meaning. They have fondly imagined that their minute examination of the letter of the law would give them eternal life. Rabbi Hillel had said ironically of some Pharisees: “Who has gained for himself words of Torah has gained for himself the life of the world to come”. Yet they failed to see the witness which these same scriptures bore to him who has “life in himself” and in his message (verse 40). As a result, they “refuse to come” to him who is the giver of life. This is the tragedy announced in the prologue (1:11).

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d. UNBELIEF OF JESUS’ HEARERS

John 5:41-47

40. Read John 5:41-47 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference

41. Read John 5:41
(1) No reference
42. Read John 5:42
(1) I John 2:15
43. Read John 5:43
(1) Matthew 24:5 and 24
44. Read John 5:44
(1) John 12:43
45. Read John 5:45
(1) Deuteronomy 31:26
46. Read John 5:46
(1) Deuteronomy 18:15 (3) Luke 24:44
(2) Luke 16:31 (4) John 5:39
47. Read John 5:47
(1) No reference

John 5:41-47

- 41 "I do not accept human praise;
- 42 moreover, I know that you do not have the love of God in you.
- 43 I came in the name of my Father, but you do not accept me; yet if another comes in his own name, you will accept him.
- 44 How can you believe, when you accept praise from one another and do not seek the praise that comes from the only God?
- 45 Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father: the one who will accuse you is Moses, in whom you have placed your hope.
- 46 For if you had believed Moses, you would have believed me, because he wrote about me.
- 47 But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"

Verses 41-42:

It is not because Jesus seeks human glory (cf. 8:50) that he criticizes his listeners for their unbelief; rather, it is that their unbelief demonstrates that they have no true love of God. They prefer their own will to God's. (JBC)

Verse 43:

[in the name of my Father](#) -- The rejection of Jesus amounts to the rejection of the testimony of God. But any charlatan who comes along, armed only with his own credentials, will be accepted, provided he is in accordance with preconceived ideas. Jewish history in this period was not unacquainted with false messiahs (cf. Acts 5:35ff.; Mark 13:6, 22 par.) who succeeded in firing national aspirations. This ultimately resulted

in the rebellions against Roman rule that ended in the suppression of the Jewish state in Palestine. (JBC)

Verse 44:

Thus having rejected the glory of God in favor of the glory that comes from men (cf. 12:43; Matthew 23:5ff.), they have made it impossible for themselves to believe (cf. 12:39). (JBC)

Verses 45-47:

It will therefore be unnecessary for Christ, to whom judgment has been given (verse 22), to appear before God to denounce them; they stand self-denounced by their stubbornness. Moses, here taken as author of the OT revelation, will himself denounce them, since the OT itself has pointed the way to Christ (verse 39). (JBC)

From IB:

In these verses the word “glory,” or rather “honor,” replaces “witness.” His opponents have demanded a testimonial from some human source to accredit Jesus, who declares that he cannot submit to their standards. They cannot truly love God, or they would not be indifferent to the honor “that comes from the only God,” and value the honor which a man can gain from his fellows. They are “of the earth and speak of the earth” (cf. 3:31). The evangelist illustrates this eagerness to “receive honor from one another” later in the Gospel: “Nevertheless many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (12:42-43). In contrast with these, Paul describes the true Jew as a Jew “who is one inwardly ... His praise is not from men but from God” (Romans 2:29). Although the “Jews” have rejected Jesus who came in his Father’s name (verse 45), he will not be their accuser. That role will be filled by the very one upon whom they confidently rely as their advocate. Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob (a 2nd century teacher) said, “He who does one precept gains for himself one advocate; and he who commits one transgression gains for himself one accuser”. The Jews put their trust in the security which was guaranteed to those who kept the law of Moses (verse 46); but that is a false confidence.

This controversy started with their zealous concern for the Sabbath regulations in the Pentateuch. They have failed to see the significance of such a prophecy as Deuteronomy 18:15: “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.” Their blindness to the deeper meaning of the Torah prevents them from recognizing the true nature of Jesus and accepting his message. The same argument is expressed rather differently in the closing words of the parable of Dives and Lazarus (Luke 16:31).

Much discussion has revolved around the saying “If another comes in his own name, him you will receive” (verse 43). At one time the popular interpretation was to identify this figure with Bar Cocheba, that messianic-claimant who gained the support of Rabbi Aqiba, the foremost Rabbi of his age, and whose disastrous rebellion in the years 132-135 A.D. was put down by the Emperor Hadrian. It is now generally recognized that the Gospel of John was published a generation before that event. In the Synoptic Gospels there are predictions of false messiahs and false prophets who would come in the name of Jesus, and this saying probably goes back to some such word of Christ.

The controversy continues in 7:15-24.

Session 4

Overview from LToJC:

Once again we find ourselves by the Sea of Galilee. Jesus' return to Capernaum could not have remained unknown. Close by, on either side of the city, the country was studded with villages and towns, a busy, thriving, happy multitude. Nothing like the oppressive atmosphere in Jerusalem. During the past weeks he had walked long that Lake, and by its shore and preached his Gospel in the various synagogues. And they had been "astonished at his doctrine, for his word was power." For the first time the people had heard what they felt to be "the word of God", and they had learned to love its sound.

It was probably the first morning after his return to Capernaum that we find him by the Lake. It was a busy scene; for, among the many industries by the Sea of Galilee, that of fishing was the most generally pursued, and it was probably the most lucrative as well.

Tradition had it, that since the days of Joshua, and by one of his ten ordinances, fishing in the Lake, although under certain necessary restrictions, was free to all. And as fish was among the favorite articles of diet, in health and sickness, on week-days and especially at the Sabbath meal, many must have been employed in connection with this trade. Frequent, and sometimes strange, are the Rabbinic advices, concerning what kinds of fish to eat at different times, and in what state of preparation they were to be served. They were eaten fresh, dried, or even pickled--a kind of relish or sauce was made of them, and the roe was also prepared. We are told, how the large fish was carried to market hung on a ring or twine with the smaller fish in baskets or casks. In truth, the Rabbis were veritable connoisseurs in this delicacy; they discussed their size with exaggerations, advise when they are in season, discern a peculiar flavor in the same kinds if caught in different waters.

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3. JESUS RETURNS TO DWELL IN CAPERNAUM

a. CALLING OF FOUR DISCIPLES

Matthew 4:18-22

Mark 1:16-20

1. Read Matthew 4:18-22 entirely through one time.
(1) Mark 1:16-20 (2) Luke 5:1-11

Matthew 4:18-22

- 18 As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen.
- 19 He said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."
- 20 At once they left their nets and followed him.
- 21 He walked along from there and saw two other brothers, James, the son of

Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat, with their father Zebedee,
mending their nets. He called them,
22 and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him.

From JBC:

This brief passage is compiled by Matthew as an introduction to the first of his major discourses, the Sermon on the Mount. The summary is described in commonplaces: teaching in the synagogues (mentioned several times), proclaiming the good news of the reign, healing diseases, and exorcising demons. As a result of these activities Jesus became known “in all Syria” (4:34). The Roman province of Syria was bounded by the Tarsus mountains, the Syrian desert, the Nabatean kingdom, and the Mediterranean. Matthew means those parts of the province mentioned in 4:25: Galilee, the Decapolis (N and E of Galilee), Judea and Perea (E of the Jordan). These are regions which Jesus traversed. The region of Tyre and Sidon (Mark 3:8; Luke 6:17) is not mentioned, very probably because Matthew thought that this territory was already included in his enumeration.

Verse 18:

[Simon](#) -- is a Greek name used in place of the Hebrew “Simeon.” [Peter](#)-- is his nickname. Many Jews in all parts of Palestine had Greek names, and [Andrew](#) is an example. [casting a net](#) -- probably a circular net with weights and a draw rope around its edge. Fishing was an important industry in the Sea of Galilee. (IB)

Verse 19:

[Come after me](#) -- in some versions, it reads “follow me” which here means “be my disciple.” Rabbinical discipleship demanded intimate daily contact with the teacher-- one formed one’s character and learned the law by example as well as precept. In rabbinical and Greek literature “to catch men” usually carried with it an evil sense, as in Jeremiah 16:16. Jesus turns the idea around; his disciples become [fishers of men](#) in order to save them. Like the rabbis, he had special disciples, and much of his teaching is addressed directly to them. But, unlike the Rabbis, he gave a brief training in a few simple principles; and their vocation was not be scholars but heralds of the kingdom, actively seeking out and saving those who were most in need. (IB)

Verse 20:

The story is told dramatically, as in the call of Elisha (I Kings 19:19-21). Perhaps Jesus had previously known the brothers, but it would not be exceptional in the Near East for men to follow such a summons without further ado. (IB)

Verse 21:

[James](#) -- and Jacob are variant English forms of the same Hebrew name. (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

Engaged in their fishing on the afternoon, evening, and night of his arrival in Capernaum, they would probably not have known of Jesus presence until he spoke to them. The expression “follow me” would be readily understood, as implying a call to become the permanent disciple of a teacher. Similarly, it was not only the practice of the Rabbis, but it was also regarded as one of the most sacred duties for a Master to gather around him a circle of disciples. Therefore, neither Peter and Andrew, nor the sons of Zebedee, could have misunderstood the call of Jesus, or even regarded it as strange.

Previously, on that memorial return from his temptation, they had learned to know him as the Messiah, and they followed him. Now that the time had come for gathering around Him a separate discipleship, when, with the visit to the “unknown feast”, the Messianic activity of Jesus had passed into another stage--that call to them would not come as a surprise to their minds or hearts.

So far as Jesus is concerned, we notice three things: (1) The call came after the open breach with, and the initial persecution of, the Jewish authorities. It was therefore, a call to fellowship in his peculiar relationship to the synagogue. (2) It necessitated the abandonment of all their former occupations, and indeed, of all earthly ties. And (3), it was from the first clearly marked as totally different from a call to such discipleship as that of any other Master in Israel. It was not to learn more of doctrine, nor more fully to follow out a life-direction already taken, rather it was to begin and to become something quite new, of which their former occupation offered an emblem--they would no longer be catching fish, rather they would be catching men. Such a call could not have been addressed to them if they had not already been disciples of Jesus. They understood to some extent His mission and the character of the Kingdom of God. Their loving belief in him must have been deep because it needed not even a spoken “Yes” on their part -- they simply forsook ship and home to follow him. And so, successively, Simon and Andrew, and John and James--those who had been the first to hear, were also the first to follow Jesus. And thereafter they remained closest to him.

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2. Read Mark 1:16-20 entirely through one time.

(1) Matthew 4:18-22

(2) Luke 5:1-11

Mark 1:16-20

- 16 As he passed by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea; they were fishermen.
- 17 Jesus said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."
- 18 Then they abandoned their nets and followed him.
- 19 He walked along a little farther and saw James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They too were in a boat mending their nets.
- 20 Then he called them. So they left their father Zebedee in the boat along with the hired men and followed him.

Verse 16:

As he passed by -- The early church knew that certain of Jesus' disciples had been with him from the time of John (Acts 1:21-23; 10:37); hence Mark places this episode at the beginning of the Galilean ministry. Although the words suggest an almost casual encounter, the original Greek verbs which mean “to pass by”, when predicated of Jesus in the Gospels, occur in stories of epiphanies (Matthew 9:27; 20:30; Luke 18:37; Mark 2:14; Mark 6:38). The meaning of an epiphany is the manifestation of a divine being. It can also mean a sudden intuitive leap of understanding; especially through an ordinary but striking occurrence. In the OT, God (I Kings 19:11; II Samuel 23:4 [LXX]),

his goodness (Exodus 33:19), or his glory (Exodus 33:22) are said “to pass by,” that is, to be shown forth. Here the expression signifies an epiphany of Jesus’ Messianic power to create disciples. (JBC)

“Walked by” is better English, and it is equally as good a translation from the Greek as is “passing along”; it is not a question now of Jesus’ route. We might say “As he was walking beside...” How much time has elapsed since Jesus’ return to Galilee is not known. Evidently the fishers already knew him. As is clear from the Gospel as a whole, Mark’s paragraphs are not always in strict chronological sequence. “Sea of Galilee” is really a lake--and it is called a lake by Luke, Josephus, and Greek writers. It is about seven miles wide and twelve miles long, and is famous for its fisheries. Jewish usage was “sea” of Chinnereth; therefore, Mark, following Palestinian Christian tradition, writes “sea.” (IB)

Verse 17:

Come after me -- Jesus makes an imperative claim upon his disciples and gives new direction to their lives. No less important is the immediate effect of his summons. (JBC)

Verses 17-18:

“After me” is almost a technical term for discipleship (cf. verse 20). Jewish teachers called their disciples to follow them; one would not presume to follow without an invitation. “To become fishers of men” is an OT figure of speech (Jeremiah 16:16), although not in a good sense; it is also found in sayings of Greek philosophers. Perhaps “to become” is an over-translation; “I will make you” conveys the idea. Mark clearly has in mind the later missionary work of the Apostles. Luke 5:1-11 gives a variant of this story, with fuller motivation of the saying, although his narrative has been influenced by Mark. Some scholars think that still another, and more legendary, account of Peter’s call underlies the appendix to John (chapter 21). “Their nets” rather than “the nets”, has adequate support in the manuscripts. (IB)

Verse 19:

saw James, ... and his brother John -- Mark combines incidents so as to make the three privileged disciples the first to be called (contrast Luke 5:1-11; John 1:37, 42, 43). (JBC)

The picturesque scene with the two pairs of brothers engaged in contrasted activities, the first aggressive, the other quiet, is vividly described by Mark--without, however, his suggesting any deeper symbolism in the picture. Some versions have “ship” which is not accurate in modern English to describe a fishing boat. Mark’s definite article does not always need to be translated (cf. 4:1); “in a boat” is all he means. (IB)

Verse 20:

they left their father Zebedee -- Mark gives the impression that Peter and Andrew answered Jesus’ call by leaving behind their livelihood, whereas James and John responded by severing family ties. This may be exaggerated, but Mark’s primary purpose is to show that discipleship entails the renunciation of possessions (cf. 10:21) and family ties (10:29). (JBC)

with the hired men -- some versions have “with the hired servants” or “hired help.” That they were paid workers indicates that Zebedee was not poor, but it certainly does not imply that he was rich, or even well to do. Any fisherman who owned a boat

and some nets might conceivably hire workers to help him, especially in a good season. Mark does not mean to suggest that James and John were making any special sacrifice in order to follow Jesus. (IB)

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b. JESUS' MINISTRY IN CAPERNAUM

Mark 1:21-22

Page 5

Luke 4:31-32

Mark 1:23-28

Luke 4:33-37

Mark 1:29-31

Luke 4:38-39

Matthew 8:14-15

Mark 1:32-34

Luke 4:40-41

Matthew 8:16-17

Mark 1:35-38

Luke 4:42-43

3. Read Mark 1:21-28 entirely through one time.

(1) Luke 4:31-37

4. Read Mark 1:21

(1) No reference

5. Read Mark 1:22

(1) Matthew 7:28-29

Mark 1:21-22

21 Then they came to Capernaum, and on the sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught.

22 The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.

Several episodes form a day's ministry at Capernaum, illustrating Jesus' Messianic authority in word and act. (JBC)

Verse 21:

Capernaum -- This was an important town on the northwestern shore of the Lake of Galilee (686 feet below sea level). Capernaum was a trade and toll station between the seaport city of Ptolemais on the Mediterranean and Damascus further north on the edge of the desert, or between Philip's territory and the cities of the Decapolis southeast of the lake (cf. 3:1). (JBC)

taught -- Mark records much less of Jesus' doctrine than Matthew or Luke; yet he associates the activity of teaching more closely with Jesus' self-revelation. Except for 6:30 and 7:7 (=Isaiah 29:13), it is always Jesus who teaches. His teaching is connected with his miraculous power (1:27), and like the latter it causes amazement (1:22, 27; 6:2; 7:37; 10:26; 11:18). Those whom Jesus teaches are often specified as the people, or the disciples, but what he teaches is specified only in the second half of Mark: his passion and resurrection, insoluble marriage, David's son, the way of God, and caution against the scribes and Pharisees. In the first half of Mark, Jesus teaches only "the secret of God's kingdom" (4:10), and in a veiled way through parables (4:10-12, 33, 34). Thus the coming section is to be a veiled revelation of Jesus' messiah-ship. (JBC)

"Capernaum" was probably at the north end of the lake, on the highway from Ptolemais to Damascus, and on the border of Antipas' territory, hence the toll booth or tax office (2:14). It was one of the most important towns in Galilee, and an appropriate place for Jesus to begin his ministry. The ruined site where Capernaum once was is now known as Tell Hum. "Immediately" is a characteristic stylism of Mark, and it probably meant only "on the following Sabbath." The fishers of verses 16-20 would not have been working on the Sabbath, although they might have been busy on Friday, with the Sabbath "coming in" at sundown that evening. But it is questionable if the Sabbath evening service--Friday evening--was then in use in the early part of the first century. Verses 29 and 32 imply that the events of verses 21-34 took place on one day, from morning to evening. (IB)

Verse 22:

as one having authority and not as the scribes -- In the primitive tradition "authority" probably stood for the Hebrew word which meant the "authority" of a rabbi to impose a decision with binding force. The word "scribe" corresponds to the Hebrew word meaning a teacher of lower rank than a rabbi. Jesus would therefore have been contrasted to such lesser teachers. However, in Mark the Greek word for "authority" implies the Messianic authority that Jesus exercises in action. His teaching constituted an exercise of that same authority by which he overthrew Satan's rule. (JBC)

"One who had authority"; that is, as a prophet, by direct authorization from God, and not as a scribe. The scribes were the official teachers or expounders of the Torah. As a member of a school, the scribe would teach what he had learned from his master--namely, the scribal tradition (7:9). Jesus, on the contrary, as a lay teacher of religion, not educated in the scribal manner (cf. John 7:15), but inspired by the divine Spirit (verse 10), spoke with immediate and personal authority. Mark does not say that he spoke as a prophet but this was certainly the impression men gained (cf. 6:15; 8:28). (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

It was the Sabbath--the first after he had called around him his first permanent disciples; it was also the first after his return from the feast at Jerusalem. As of yet there were no watchful enemies in waiting to entrap him in a breach of the law, which would furnish grounds for a judicial procedure against him. But, from their presence and activity so soon afterwards, we infer, that the authorities of Jerusalem had sent some of their members to track his steps in Galilee.

For the moment all seemed calm and undisturbed. Those simple, warm-hearted Galileans yielded themselves to the power of his words and works, not discerning hidden

blasphemy in what he said, nor even a Sabbath-desecration in his later healing on God's holy day.

It is morning, and Jesus goes to the synagogue in Capernaum. It was there that he wanted to teach. It is not necessary to suppose that, what held his hearers spell-bound, had necessarily also had an effect on their hearts and lives. Men may be enraptured by the ideal without trying to make it the real. In this instance it was not only what he taught, but the contrast with that to which they were accustomed when listening to the Scribes, which filled them with "amazement."

6. Read Luke 4:31-37 entirely through one time.

(1) Mark 1:21-28

7. Read Luke 4:31

(1) Matthew 4:13

(2) John 2:12

8. Read Luke 4:32

(1) Matthew 7:28-29

Luke 4:31-32

31 Jesus then went down to Capernaum, a town of Galilee. He taught them on the sabbath,

32 and they were astonished at his teaching because he spoke with authority.

These introductory verses (Mark 1:21f. Par.; cf. Matthew 7:28f.) imply that no single day was to be described. (JBC)

[on the Sabbath \[days\]](#) -- The plural indicates a typical day in the ministry of Jesus. Luke is now following Mark's Gospel, but always with careful editing. He omits the indelicacy of Mark's phrase that Jesus was not teaching like the scribes. For his part, Matthew transfers the phrase to the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount. (JBC)

[with authority](#) -- This phrase brings out the impact of Jesus' words upon the conscience of his audience. (JBC)

"went down" from the Galilean highlands to a town, situated 686 feet below sea level. Capernaum has been identified with Tell Hum, the site of extensive ruins on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee. In Jesus' day it was an important toll station on the trade route from Ptolemais to Damascus and a port for maritime trade with Philip's tetrarchy and the Decapolis. It was therefore strategically located as a center for Jesus' Galilean ministry. For the benefit of non-Jewish readers Luke describes it as a city of Galilee. (IB)

9. Read Mark 1:23-28

(1) No reference

Mark 1:23-28

23 In their synagogue was a man with an unclean spirit;

24 he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are--the Holy One of God!"

- 25 Jesus rebuked him and said, "Quiet! Come out of him!"
26 The unclean spirit convulsed him and with a loud cry came out of him.
27 All were amazed and asked one another, "What is this? A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him."
28 His fame spread everywhere throughout the whole region of Galilee.

In Mark, Jesus' first miracle is, significantly, an exorcism, a sign that in his presence the power of evil is reduced to impotency. God's rule is at hand. (JBC)

Verse 23:

[a man with an unclean spirit](#) -- Some versions read here: "a man possessed by a foul spirit." In antiquity sickness was ascribed to evil spirits. Many of Jesus' miracles are recounted in terms of exorcism. (JBC)

The expression "with an unclean spirit" is rare outside the NT (cf. Zechariah 13:2; Enoch 99:7). Was the spirit itself unclean? (cf. 9:25). Or did demoniac possession lead to uncleanness; (1) in the *ritual* or in the *physical* senses. If in the ritual it would convey a disregard for the Levitical food regulations, touching dead bodies, and so forth; if in the physical it would suggest actual filth, like David's in his feigned madness at Gath (I Samuel 21:13)? The ancient popular inference was that madness was due to possession by a demon; madmen were (and are) frequently dirty; uncleanness was therefore due to the demon, which was accordingly described as "unclean." (IB)

Verse 24:

[he cried out](#) -- A common feature in miracle stories is to describe the gravity of the sufferer's affliction; this is intimated here by the defiant cries of the demoniac and the details in 1:26. (JBC)

[What have you to do with us](#) -- Some versions read here: "why do you meddle with us?" See Luke 4:34; John 2:4. (JBC)

[come to destroy us](#) -- Jesus is in effect recognized as the Messiah, anointed with God's Spirit and possessing power over evil spirits. (JBC)

[I know who you are](#) -- To know one's adversary's name was to give one a magical power over him; the demon names Jesus twice; "Jesus of Nazareth," then "God's Holy One," that is, a charismatic prophet like Elisha (II Kings 4:9). Here as elsewhere in Mark (1:34; 3:11-12; 5:7) Jesus' true identity is a secret kept from the crowds but known to the Christian reader and attested by the demons. (JBC)

The demoniac recognized the teacher who could banish the demon. But Mark doubtless takes it as the direct and supernatural recognition of the divine Son of God by the demon, voicing its conviction of impending doom through the poor man's lips. Demons often sensed the power of the exorcist. One scholar quotes a description of a case of madness: "If she sees any physician, or even hears him speak, she is most violently enraged against him." "Holy One of God" was not a messianic title (cf. Psalm 16:10); but Mark doubtless understood it as expressing the demon's recognition of Jesus as a divine being, the Son of God (cf. 1:34; 3:11-12). (IB)

Verse 25:

[rebuked him](#) -- The Greek verb used here technically also means "exorcise." In the LXX it translates the Hebrew word which means "rebuke" (see Zechariah 3:3). (JBC)

"Be silent" (addressed to the demon): This is a common formula of exorcism (cf.

4:39). Mark does not, of course, stress the therapeutic effect of the words upon the demoniac, a feature which would be of special interest to modern readers. (IB)

Verse 26:

“Convulsing him ... loud voice”; that is, after a final convulsion and wild cry the man became quiet and was healed. The only possible inference, for ancient popular thinking, was that the demon had departed. For Mark, as well as for those who had handed down the tradition, there was the further inference that Jesus’ divine power had banished the unclean spirit and restored the man. (IB)

Verse 27:

“What is this?” The new teaching was authenticated by the manifestation of power to ban an evil spirit. Some manuscripts read, “Who is this and what is this new teaching, that with authority ...?” This reading is equally Mark’s style, but it has perhaps been influenced by 4:41. Mark generalizes, “unclean spirits”: What took place on this first day in Capernaum was typical of what was to follow--the powers of evil were already being vanquished (cf. 3:27). (IB)

Verse 28:

“All the surrounding region of Galilee”. Matthew 4:24 takes this to mean “all of Syria; while Luke 4:37 says it was in the neighborhood of Capernaum. (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

Among the hearers in the synagogue that Sabbath morning was one who was afflicted. The term “demoniacal possession” does not occur in the NT. We owe it to Josephus from whom it has passed into ecclesiastical language. We dismiss it the more readily since it seems to convey a wrong impression. The NT speaks of those who had a spirit, or a demon, or demons, or an unclean spirit, or the spirit of an unclean demon, but chiefly of persons who were “demonized.” Similarly, it seems a strange inaccuracy on the part of commentators to exclude from the Gospel of John all notice of the “demonized.” Although not reporting any healing of the demonized, John does share the fundamental view of the Synoptists. This appears in John 7:20 and 8:48 and 52, and especially in John 8:49 and 10:20-21. If he had not shared the ideas of the Synoptists it is difficult to believe that the writer of John would have put into the mouth of Jesus the answer “I am not a demon,” or have allowed him to be described by His friends as not one “demonized,” without a single word to show dissent from the popular view.

One might question whether Jesus himself shared the views of the Evangelists in regard to what they called the “demonized.” In response to that question, Jesus can be found not only tolerating the popular “prejudice,” but also adopting it for the sake of more readily healing those who were afflicted. He even made it part of his disciples’ commission to “cast out demons”, and when the disciples afterwards reported their success in this matter, Jesus actually made it a matter of thanksgiving to God. In the light of history, impartial criticism can arrive at no other conclusion than that Jesus of Nazareth shared the views of the Evangelists, regarding the “demonized.”

One might also question the character of the phenomenon of the “demonized.” It is scarcely possible to ascribe it simply to moral causes since in Mark 9:21 the demonized was a child. Similarly, personal faith does not seem have been a mandatory condition of healing. As other diseases are mentioned without being attributed to demoniacal influence, and as all who were dumb, deaf, or paralyzed would not have been described as

“demonized,” it is evident that all physical, or even mental distempers of the same class were not ascribed to the same cause; some might be natural, while others were demoniacal. More or less violent symptoms accompanied the disease in every demonized person. These were greatly aggravated in their final outburst, when the demon quit his habitation. We therefore regard the phenomena described as caused by the influence of such spirits primarily upon that which forms the connection between body and mind, the nervous system. This would produce different effects depending on the part of the nervous system affected. To this must be added a certain impersonality of consciousness, so that for a time the consciousness was not that of the demonized, but rather the demonizer, just as in certain mesmeric states the consciousness of the mesmerized is really that of the mesmerizer.

Neither the NT, nor even rabbinical literature, conveys the idea of permanent demoniac indwelling, to which the later term “possession” owes its origin. On the contrary, such accounts as the one we find here, convey the impression of a sudden influence, which in most cases seemed occasioned by the spiritual effect of the Person or of the Words of the Christ. The phenomenon was only that of a temporary state. It is not referred to either in the OT, or in the Apocrypha, or for that matter even in the Mishnah. We do, however, find it mentioned in the NT and in the writings of Josephus. Therefore, we must decide on its truthfulness purely on NT grounds. He who regards Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God can be in no doubt of its truth.

Since we believe that this demoniac influence was not permanent in the demonized, the analogy of certain mesmeric influences seems to apply exactly to the situation. It is of deepest importance to always keep in mind that the “demonized” was not a permanent state, or possession by the powers of darkness. For that establishes a moral element, since during the period of their temporary freedom, the demonized might have shaken themselves free from the overshadowing power, or sought release from it. Therefore the demonized state involved personal responsibility, although it was that of a diseased and disturbed consciousness which had a disability in making correct choices.

This isn’t all there is to say about this subject. Jesus had come not only to destroy the works of the Devil. His Incarnation meant this--and more: to set the prisoners free. By a word of command He gagged the confessions of the demon, unwillingly made, and even so with hostile intent. It was not by such voices that He would have his Messiahship ever proclaimed. Such testimony was wholly unfitting and incongruous; it would have been a strange discord on the witness of the Baptist, and the Voice which had proclaimed him from heaven.

The same power which gagged the confession also bade the demon relinquish his prey. One wild outburst--and the sufferer was for ever free. But on all those who saw and heard it the result was of confusion and astonishment. Each turned to his neighbor with the inquiry: “What is this? A new doctrine with authority! And he commanded the unclean spirits, and they obeyed him.”

10. Read Luke 4:33-37
- (1) No reference

11. Read Luke 4:33-34

(1) Matthew 8:29	(3) Mark 5:7
(2) Mark 1:23-24	(4) Luke 8:29
12. Read Luke 4:34

(1) Luke 4:41	(2) John 6:69
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13. Read Luke 4:35-37

(1) No reference	
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Luke 4:33-37

- 33 In the synagogue there was a man with the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out in a loud voice,
- 34 "Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are--the Holy One of God!"
- 35 Jesus rebuked him and said, "Be quiet! Come out of him!" Then the demon threw the man down in front of them and came out of him without doing him any harm.
- 36 They were all amazed and said to one another, "What is there about his word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out."
- 37 And news of him spread everywhere in the surrounding region.

In Luke's account, Jesus enters the synagogue that a Roman officer had built (7:5), distinct from the one erected around 200 A.D. whose ruins are still visible at Tell Hum (the modern name for ancient Capernaum). Jesus meets a man possessed by an unclean spirit that made him unfit for worship and godly joy. Because the Bible attributes evil (physical as well as moral) ultimately to a diabolical force (Genesis 3), it is not always easy to determine the exact nature of demonic possession in any biblical incident. Jesus' presence instigated a vehement confrontation between superhuman forces of goodness and evil. (JBC)

Verse 33:

The synagogue at Capernaum is said in 7:5 to have been built by an officer in the Roman army. The ruins of the most ancient synagogue yet found in Galilee are at Tell Hum. Although it dates from about 200 A.D., one archaeologist believes that "the Capernaum synagogue stands on the site and follows the plan of an earlier synagogue or of earlier synagogues, and therefore may be safely regarded as a reconstruction of the one in which Jesus himself taught." (IB)

[the spirit of an unclean demon](#) -- the widespread Oriental belief in demonic possession as the cause of disease is scarcely to be found in the OT, but it flourished in late Judaism under Babylonian and Persian influences. It pervades the gospel tradition. It is likely that many of the miracle stories in the Gospels have been borrowed from popular Jewish and Hellenistic cycles and attached to Jesus. There is also an observable tendency on the part of the evangelists to heighten and embellish the reputation that Jesus was widely known as a healer, particularly of what we should now describe as mental and nervous diseases. (IB)

[Ha](#) -- Some versions read "Ah" which is an interjection of dismay. (IB)

Have you come -- That is, into the world. The demon speaks for the whole regiment of Satan. In late Judaism the freeing of men from enslavement to Belial and the destruction of all evil spirits were acknowledged functions of the Messiah. (IB)

he cried out in a loud voice -- Some versions read: “he shrieked at the top of his voice”. What he cried is put in idiomatic Greek: the first word is an interjection registering anger and surprise; the second phrase is literally “what to us and to you?” which always draws a line of division (cf. Joshua 22:24; Judges 11:12; I Kings 17:18; John 2:4). (JBC)

Verse 34:

I know who you are--the Holy One of God -- Here is the cry of a conscience-stricken man, sensing his separation from God’s goodness in Jesus, frantically attempting to control the divine by uttering its name. In the Bible to name someone is to have authority over him by thoroughly understanding that person’s power and vocation. (JBC)

“The Holy One of God” is a messianic title (cf. John 6:69). (IB)

Verse 35:

Be quiet -- Some versions read “muzzle your mouth.” Jesus’ reply to be silent with the words “muzzle your mouth” bears all the strength of spontaneous, colloquial language. (JBC)

“Be silent”. Mark has imposed a theory of “the messianic secret” on his source material. By virtue of their supernatural knowledge the demons had recognized Jesus as Messiah, but he had ordered them not to betray the fact. Luke takes over Mark’s phrase, but not his doctrine (cf. also verse 41b). (IB)

threw the man down -- Luke changes Mark’s picturesque word for tearing and rending, and substitutes a medical term employed by Hippocrates and Galen for convulsions. (JBC)

without doing him any harm -- An important observation by Luke the physician. (JBC)

“Having done him no harm” is an addition by Luke to heighten the miraculous. (IB)

Verse 37:

news -- Luke is always conscious of the reactions of the crowd (4:20; 22:32, 36; 5:26) and the quick spread of the news (4:14f., 37; 5:15, 17). “What is this word?” Luke takes this question intact from II Samuel 1:4 (LXX). Even though “word” can denote action and often has that connection, Luke may be deliberately intending to draw the reader’s attention away from excessive preoccupation with a miracle and invite them to concentrate on a fuller appreciation of the good news of salvation. (JBC)

Read “What is this word”. It is to be understood in the light of its source from Mark: “What is this? A new teaching?” (Mark 1:27). (IB)

This story of miraculous healing exhibit’s the more or less stereotyped form of such narratives in the Gospels: (1) the demon recognizes the exorcist and attempts to evade his authority; (2) the exorcist reproves the demon and employs a formula of exorcism; (3) the demon takes a violent departure from the individual he had possessed; and (4) the bystanders are astonished at the event. (IB)

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14. Read Mark 1:29-31 entirely through one time.
(1) Matthew 8:14-16 (2) Luke 4:38-41

Mark 1:29-31

- 29 On leaving the synagogue he entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John.
30 Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever. They immediately told him about her.
31 He approached, grasped her hand, and helped her up. Then the fever left her and she waited on them.

Verse 29:

entered the house -- The mention of this private setting and of privileged disciples may be an eyewitness detail; in such settings (4:10, 34; 5:37-40; 6:31-32; 7:17, 24, 33; 9:2, 28, 33; 10:10; 13:3) and in the presence of his disciples (5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33) Jesus makes important self-disclosures. (JBC)

Verse 31:

helped her up -- Some versions read: "raised her up." Mark uses the verb, which is frequently used of Jesus' resurrection (Mark 14:28; 16:6; I Corinthians 15:4; Acts 3:15; 13:37). Possibly the early church viewed the miracle as a foreshadowing of the eschatological resurrection brought forth in mankind through Christ's death and resurrection. (JBC)

she waited on them -- Some versions read "she served them." The detail suggests the completeness of her cure and service expected of those who have been saved by Christ (10:43-45). (JBC)

The "house" is obviously the home of Peter, but since he and Andrew were brothers, the words "and Andrew" were added. "with James and John," since all four men were now disciples, and followed Jesus wherever he went. Peter was evidently married before he became a disciple. We are not told the nature of the fever of "Simon's mother-in-law; Luke says it was "a great (or "high") fever." "Took her by the hand and lifted her up" is a characteristic "technique" of Jesus' cures (cf. verse 41 and 5:41). (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

From the synagogue we follow Jesus in company with his called disciples to Peter's wedded home. But no festive meal awaited them there. A sudden access of violent fever, such as is now common in that district, had laid Peter's mother-in-law prostrate. Jesus is told of the sickness; he is sought to attend to her. In his presence disease and misery cannot continue. Bending over the sufferer, he "rebuked the fever," just as he had rebuked "the demon" in the synagogue, and for the same reason, since all disease, in the view of the divine healer, is the outcome of sin. Then lifting her by the hand, she rose up, healed, to minister unto them. What a Sabbath-meal it must have been after that scene in the synagogue and after that healing in the house when Jesus was their guest. They who had witnessed it all sat down to dine with him, and she who had been healed was the server of her guests. [We assume here that she served the five men at the dinner table, but the text does not say that. What other way could she have waited on them which would be true to the history of the times?]

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15. Read Luke 4:38-39 entirely through one time.
(1) Matthew 8:14-15 (2) Mark 1:29-31

Luke 4:38-39

- 38 After he left the synagogue, he entered the house of Simon. Simon's mother-in-law was afflicted with a severe fever, and they interceded with him about her.
39 He stood over her, rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up immediately and waited on them.

Luke's more majestic account lacks the homey, eyewitness details of Mark's Gospel. Jesus is no longer said to take her hand, but instead he stands over her to "rebuke" the fever. (JBC)

In Luke's account, the reader is unprepared for Simon and his intimacy with Jesus. Luke had omitted Mark's account of the disciple's call (Mark 1:16-20) and has not yet given his own (5:1-11). Paul confirms the fact that Simon (Cephas) was a married man (I Corinthians 9:5). In Mark, Andrew, James, and John are also mentioned as well as Simon, and an editorial slip on Luke's part allows the plural to remain in "they interceded with him" (and in the "them" in verse 39). "And he stood over her"; that is, at the head of her bed. Luke gilds the lily. The "fever" was "high", and after the exorcism the woman rose "immediately." Verse 39b emphasizes the success of the miracle. The detail may be unhistorical, for the Talmud expressly prohibits the table service of men by women. In the early days of the church "the twelve" were accustomed to "serve tables" as well as to preach (Acts 6:2). (IB) [This is an assumption that she served them at table. The text does not state that. We think in terms of what is done in our own time, not that of the time of Jesus. What else could Simon's mother-in-law "waited on them" have been which would be true to Jesus' own time?]

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16. Read Matthew 8:14-15 entirely through one time.
(1) Mark 1:29-31 (2) Luke 4:38-39
17. Read Matthew 8:14
(1) No reference
18. Read Matthew 8:15
(1) Mark 9:25

Matthew 8:14-15

- 14 Jesus entered the house of Peter, and saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever.
15 He touched her hand, the fever left her, and she rose and waited on him.

This is another instance of Matthew's economy with Mark's material. He omits

all names except the name of Peter, the intercession of the family, and picturesque details in the cure itself. Commentators believe the change from “she served them” to “she served him” is significant; Jesus is more than one of a group. This episode and I Corinthians 9:5 show that Peter was married. (JBC)

Verse 14:

Peter’s wife is mentioned in I Corinthians 9:5. Some commentators believe this to be a story told by Peter himself. The “fever” has sometimes been identified as malaria or thought of as due to a psychological disturbance. (IB)

Verse 15:

According to Mark 1:31, Jesus took her by the hand and raised her up; a gesture of healing well known in ancient stories. At a later time, the rabbis forbade women to serve at table, but probably Galilean peasants had no such scruples. (IB) [Again it is only an assumption that she waited on them at table.]

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19. Read Mark 1:32-34 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference

Mark 1:32-34

- 32 When it was evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were ill or possessed by demons.
33 The whole town was gathered at the door.
34 He cured many who were sick with various diseases, and he drove out many demons, not permitting them to speak because they knew him.

The previous two stories closes Jesus’ Sabbath ministry at Capernaum and shows (1) that his miracles were not restricted to a few, and (2) that they were a manifestation of his messiah-ship, even if only demons were able to penetrate this secret. (JBC)

Although no doubt based upon tradition, this paragraph is an editorial summary in Mark’s own style. “At sundown” marks the conclusion of the Sabbath, after which burdens might be borne and the sick be brought to Jesus. Since Jesus had already exorcised a demon and cured a fever, both the sick and the demoniacs were brought to him. “He healed many”: the parallels say that he healed “all” or “each one.” But it is doubtful if “many” is used in contrast to “all” in verse 32. What Mark means is “They brought all, and he healed them, and they were many in number.” He is not thinking here, as he is in 6:5, of any limitation upon Jesus’ healing power. (IB)

“Would not permit ... knew him”: Jesus does not encourage the demons to proclaim his divine nature or his superhuman calling. He will not accept testimony from such unclean, unholy sources! (Cf. verse 25). This trait is no doubt historical: Jesus silenced the tumultuous cries of the possessed and calmed their minds. But Mark takes it in another sense; namely, that Jesus silenced the demons, not the demoniacs, “because they knew him.” His secret is not to be sounded abroad by demons before the time. The addition “to be the Christ” though found in some good manuscripts, is no doubt derived from the parallel in Luke 4:41. (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

It was evening. The sun was setting, and the Sabbath past. All that day it had been told from house to house what had been done in the synagogue; it had been whispered what had taken place in the home of their neighbor Simon. This one conviction had been borne in upon them all, that "with authority," he spoke, and his words were filled with authority and power. He commanded even the unclean spirits, and they obeyed. No scene is more characteristic of Jesus than that on this autumn evening at Capernaum.

There must have been many homes of sorrow, care, and sickness there, and in the populous neighborhood around. To them, to all, had the door of hope now been opened. No disease was too desperate, when even the demons owned the authority of his mere rebuke. From all parts they bring them: mothers, widows, wives, fathers, children, husbands--their loved ones, the treasures they had almost lost; and the whole city throngs--a hushed, solemnized, overawed multitude--expectant, waiting at the door of Simon's dwelling. There they laid them, along the street up to the market-place, on their beds; or brought them, with beseeching look and word.

In the stillness of that night, he went through that crowd, laying his hands in the blessing of healing of whatever disease of body or soul. In its blessed indefiniteness it conveys the infinite potentiality of relief, whatever misery might have fallen on us, or whatever care or sorrow oppresses us. Never was prophecy more truly fulfilled than this of Isaiah: "it was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured" (53:4).

Viewed in its real bearing on mankind with its wants, Christ, on that evening, was the real, although as yet only initial, fulfillment of the world's great hope, to which centuries before, the God-directed hand of the prophet Isaiah had pointed.

So ended that Sabbath in Capernaum: a Sabbath of healing, joy, and true rest. But far and wide, into every place in the country around throughout all the region of Galilee, spread the tidings, and with them the fame of him whom demons must obey, though they dare not pronounce him the Son of God. And on men's ears fell his name with sweet softness and infinite promise.

20. Read Luke 4:40-41 entirely through one time.

(1) Matthew 8:16

(2) Mark 1:32-34

21. Read Luke 4:40

(1) No reference

22. Read Luke 4:41

(1) Matthew 8:29

(3) Luke 4:34

(2) Mark 3:11-12

Luke 4:40-41

40 At sunset, all who had people sick with various diseases brought them to him. He laid his hands on each of them and cured them.

41 And demons also came out from many, shouting, "You are the Son of God." But he rebuked them and did not allow them to speak because they knew that he was the Messiah.

Now that the Sabbath is over (Jeremiah 17:21f.), the sick can be carried to Jesus. While Luke carefully distinguishes between the sick and the possessed, Matthew combines both cases so as to quote from Isaiah 53:4. The possessed cry out in dismay and frustration, but Jesus quiets them, lest he be recognized simply as a wonder-worker and political messiah. (JBC)

“When the sun was setting” that is, when the Sabbath regulations were no longer binding. By adding “he laid his hands on ... them,” Luke specifies the technique of healing that Jesus used on this occasion. In Mark, Jesus healed “many” (Mark 1:34); in Luke, “every one.” “Natural” diseases are apparently distinguished from illnesses due to demon possession. The best manuscripts support the reading “You are the Son of God!” This messianic appellation, and the following phrase “but he rebuked them”, were inserted by Luke at this point from Mark 3:11-12, which has no parallel otherwise in Luke’s Gospel. Luke’s narrative--as well as Mark’s--is an enthusiastic generalization of Jesus’ healing powers. (IB)

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- 23. Read Matthew 8:16-17 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference
- 24. Read Matthew 8:16
(1) No reference
- 25. Read Matthew 8:17
(1) Isaiah 53:4

Matthew 8:16-17

- 16 When it was evening, they brought him many who were possessed by demons, and he drove out the spirits by a word and cured all the sick,
- 17 to fulfill what had been said by Isaiah the prophet: "He took away our infirmities and bore our diseases."

The evening is the evening of Mark’s “day in Capernaum,” of which Matthew has preserved only this passage (Mark 1:32-34 and the preceding incident of Peter’s mother-in-law. The Gospels distinguish between those “possessed by demons” and the “ill”; not every illness was regarded as the work of a demon. It is doubtful that Mark meant to say that they brought all the ill and Jesus cured some; but Matthew in any case alters Mark to say that Jesus healed “all.” (JBC)

Verse 16:

by a word -- An addition by Matthew emphasizing the easy exercise of power. Allusion to the Messianic secret is omitted, but a fulfillment quotation from Isaiah 53:4 is added. The text is quoted not according to the LXX but according to the MT, and the meaning is altered by a wordplay. The passage of Isaiah refers to the vicarious suffering of the Servant of the Lord, who takes upon himself the illnesses and the stripes of others. Matthew interprets the words “take” and “carry” as take away, which Jesus does by healing. (JBC)

This verse is an abbreviation of Mark's summary (Mark 1:32-34). (IB)

Verse 17:

The quotation is a translation of Isaiah 53:4 independent of the LXX. Isaiah had referred to the Servant of God who "took our infirmities" by suffering them himself, but Matthew thinks merely of Jesus' healing power. Early Christians loved to identify their Messiah with the suffering servant. It is not certain that the rabbis interpreted Isaiah 53 as referring to the Messiah earlier than the 3rd century A.D., since the Aramaic Targum of the prophets may be that late. (IB)

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26. Read Mark 1:35-38
(1) Luke 4:42-44

Mark 1:35-38

- 35 Rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed.
36 Simon and those who were with him pursued him
37 and on finding him said, "Everyone is looking for you."
38 He told them, "Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come."

Verse 35:

he prayed -- Jesus' departure was occasioned by the false messianic hopes engendered by his miracles. The other occasions on which Jesus prays (6:46; 14:32-42) are times of stress connected with the true nature of his messiah-ship. (JBC)

Verse 36:

Simon and those who were with him -- This expression usually designates Jesus' disciples (3:14; 4:10; 5:18, 40; cf. 2:25; 16:10). Here Simon is presumably accompanied by Andrew, James, and John; yet Mark avoids calling them "disciples" as if to suggest that their present way of acting puts them rather in opposition to Jesus. (JBC)

Verse 37:

Everyone is looking for you -- In Mark this phrase always occurs in contexts suggesting an evil intention (8:11, 12; 11:18; 14:1) or at least a misguided sort of seeking (16:6). Simon implies that Jesus should remain at Capernaum and capitalize on the popularity aroused by his miracles. But Jesus refuses to confine his ministry to one place or to encourage the messianic hopes of the crowds. (JBC)

Verses 35-39:

Jesus leaves Capernaum in order to preach--that is, to proclaim the gospel elsewhere (verse 38). It is often thought that he viewed a prospective ministry of healing as interfering with his main task. But this was scarcely Mark's view; instead, Jesus was eager to convert "all Galilee," and, Mark adds "he cast out devils (demons)" wherever he went. "Simon and those who were with him", presumably the two pairs of brothers, the nucleus of the later band of disciples. By "every one" is meant "everyone in Capernaum." "The next towns"--the Greek text is uncertain here, but the sense is clear enough--"the surrounding villages." "Therefore came I forth" or "that is why I came out"--the existing text, which is undoubtedly correct, means, "That is why I left

Capernaum.” Mark, however, may have meant the words to convey a sense of Jesus’ mission: “That is what I have set out to do.” But this ignores the purpose expressed in verse 35, “and there prayed”, and also the fact that Jesus did not choose his mission--it was laid upon him. (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

It was an inward necessity that Jesus, when brought into contact with disease and misery, whether from physical or supernatural causes, should remove it by his Presence, by his touch, by his word. It was also an outward necessity because no other mode of teaching that was equally convincing would have reached those who were accustomed to Rabbinic disputations, and who must have looked for such a manifestation from one who claimed such authority. Therefore, thinking of the scene that had occurred the evening before, we can understand how, “very early, while it was still dark,” Jesus rose up, and went into a solitary place to pray. It was probably between three and six o’clock in the morning. It was not until some time afterward that those he had called to be his disciples rose, and missing him, followed after him. Jesus had prayed in that solitude, and consecrated it. After such a day, and in prospect of entering on his second journey through Galilee, and this time in so far different circumstances.

The disciples should also learn from this that he was not merely a worker of miracles, but that he, whose word demons obeyed, lived a life, not of outward but of inward prayer, in fellowship with his Father, and baptized his work in prayer. Yet for the moment it seemed difficult for them to realize this. “Everyone is looking for you”, and they would therefore have had him return to Capernaum. But this was the very reason why he had withdrawn before the dawn of the day. He had come forth so as not to attract the crowds, and have them proclaim him King. His goal was to preach the Kingdom of God.

This second journey through Galilee, which the three Gospels connect with his stay at Capernaum, mark a turning-point in the working of Christ. As already mentioned, the occurrences at the “unknown feast” in Jerusalem formed a new departure. Christ had fully presented his claims to the Sanhedrists, and they had been fully rejected by the scribes and the people. Thereafter, he separated himself from that “untoward generation.” From that time on began also his systematic persecution by the authorities, when his movements were tracked and watched. Jesus went alone to Jerusalem. This, also, was fitting. Equally so, that on his return He called his disciples to be his followers; and that from Capernaum he entered, in their company, on a new phase in his work. It is significant that his work began where that of the rabbis ended.

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27. Read Luke 4:42-43
(1) Mark 1:35-38

28. Read Luke 4:42
(1) No reference

29. Read Luke 4:43
(1) Mark 1:14-15 (2) Luke 8:1

Luke 4:42-43

- 42 At daybreak, Jesus left and went to a deserted place. The crowds went looking for him, and when they came to him, they tried to prevent him from leaving them.
- 43 But he said to them, "To the other towns also I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, because for this purpose I have been sent."

Luke again portrays the psychological reactions of the crowd, how in Jesus they find their hopes fulfilled and their anxieties overcome. "They did not leave off seeking *until* they reached him and they *tried* to stay Him from going away from them." (JBC)

Mark's version of this narrative leaves the impression that Jesus' departure from Capernaum was a flight. He sought to escape the insistent demands of the residents. By omitting Mark's "and there he prayed" (Mark 1:35)--Luke more often adds some such statement (3:21; 5:16; 6:12)--Luke implies that Jesus departed in order to extend his mission. It is the people who seek Jesus, rather than the disciples as in Mark 1:36, for the latter--according to Luke--had not yet been chosen. For the same reason Luke omits Mark's "Let us go" (Mark 1:38). "I must preach the good news of the Kingdom of God to the other cities also" is a clarification of Mark's "that I may preach there also (Mark 1:38) and the first occurrence in Luke of Jesus' characteristic message. "I was sent for this purpose" is a christological interpretation of Mark's "for this is why I came out" (Mark 1:38). For a similar phrasing of Jesus' sense of commission see John 8:42. (IB) Verse 43:

[the kingdom of God](#) -- This intimate bond is achieved through announcing the good news of the Kingdom of God--a favorite theme of Paul but never found in the Gospels outside Luke (9:2, 11, 60; 16:16), except for a citation in Matthew 11:5. Luke includes here John's theme of being "sent" (John 4:34; 5:23). (JBC)

Session 5

Overview from LToJC:

In Jesus' outward history we can catch a glimpse of His inner Being, of which these miracles form part of his humiliation. They also belong to that way which he had chosen in his initial conquest of the Tempter in the Wilderness, when he chose, not the sudden display of absolute power for the liberation of his people, but the painful, slow method of meeting their wants, and addressing himself to the understanding and capacity of those over whom he would reign.

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c. A PREACHING TOUR OF GALILEE

Matthew 4:23-25

Mark 1:39

Luke 4:44

1. Read Matthew 4:23-25 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference
2. Read Matthew 4:23
(1) Matthew 9:35 (3) Luke 4:15, 44
(2) Mark 1:39
3. Read Matthew 4:24
(1) No reference
4. Read Matthew 4:25
(1) Mark 3:7-8 (2) Luke 6:17-19

Matthew 4:23-25

- 23 He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people.
- 24 His fame spread to all of Syria, and they brought to him all who were sick with various diseases and racked with pain, those who were possessed, lunatics, and paralytics, and he cured them.
- 25 And great crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan followed him.

Summary from JBC:

This brief passage (verses 23-25) is compiled by Matthew as an introduction to the first of his major discourses, the Sermon on the Mount. The summary is described in commonplaces: teaching in the synagogues (mentioned several times); proclaiming the good new of the reign, healing diseases, and exorcising demons. As a result of these activities Jesus became known "in all Syria" (4:34). The Roman province of Syria was

bounded by the Tarsus mountains, the Syrian desert, the Nabatean kingdom, and the Mediterranean. Matthew means those parts of the province mentioned in 4:25; Galilee, the Decapolis (north and east of Galilee), Judea and Perea (east of the Jordan). These are regions which Jesus traversed. The region of Tyre and Sidon (Mark 3:8; Luke 6:17) is not mentioned, very probably because Matthew thought that this territory was already included in his enumeration.

Matthew omits Mark 1:21, 23-28, 35-38, and postpones 1:22, 29-34. He now constructs an editorial summary out of Mark 1:39; 3:7-8, 10. (IB)

Verse 23:

teaching in their synagogues -- This was an activity open to any layman competent to carry it on. It is mentioned, for example, in Mark 1:21 and Luke 4:16-30. **every disease and illness** -- some versions read: "every disease and every infirmity" which is a favorite phrase of Matthew (see 9:35; 10:1). (IB)

Literally, the text would read that Jesus "was going around in all Galilee." This is the first of the three tours of Galilee made by Jesus. This time he took the four fishermen whom he had just called to personal service. The second time he took the twelve. On the third he sent the twelve on ahead by twos and followed after them. He was teaching and preaching the gospel of the kingdom in the synagogues chiefly and on the roads and in the streets where Gentiles could hear. Healing all manner of diseases and all manner of sickness. (INT--#1)

Verse 24:

all of Syria -- probably denotes the region north of Galilee. If Matthew wrote in Syria, this place reference would especially interest his readers. In the first century "Syria" is sometimes used to include Palestine. Some versions read "those which were lunatics" (that is, moon-struck) which is a literal rendering of the Greek. In 17:15 this rare word is applied to epileptics. Modern English, however, uses "lunatics" to mean insane people; these are the "demoniacs" of the Gospel. First-century Palestinians attributed many diseases, but especially insanity, to demons. "Paralytics" is the correct translation at the end of the verse. What we now call "palsy" is only one form of paralysis; the Greek word is more inclusive. (IB)

The report of him went forth into all of Syria. Rumor carries things almost like a wireless phone. The Gentiles all over Syria to the north heard of what was going on in Galilee. The result was inevitable. Jesus had a moving hospital of patients from all over Galilee and Syria. "Those that were sick", were literally "those who had it bad," cases that the doctors could not cure. "Stricken with various diseases and torments"--"Held together" or "compressed" is the idea. The same word is used by Jesus in Luke 12:50 and by Paul in Philippians 1:23 and of the crowd pressing on Jesus (Luke 8:45). They brought these difficult and chronic cases to Jesus, which included fevers, leprosy, and blindness. The adjective means literally many colored or variegated like flowers, paintings, jaundice, etc. Some had "torments". Sickness was often regarded as "torture." These diseases are further described in a descending scale of violence as "demoniacs, lunatics, and paralytics." People who were possessed by demons were considered lunatics or "moon-struck" because the epileptic seizures supposedly followed the phases of the moon. Our word "lunatic" is from the Latin luna (moon) and carries the same picture as the Greek word for moon. These diseases are called "torments." (INT--#1)

Verse 25:

The **Decapolis** (“ten cities”) was a league of Greek-speaking (and largely pagan) city-states. All the towns which Pliny mentions as forming the group were east of the Jordan except Scythopolis (Bethshan). Some of the best known were Damascus, Gadara, Pella, Gerasa, and Philadelphia (modern Amman). Here the term may include the territory surrounding them. (IB)

Great multitudes--not just one crowd, but crowds and crowds. And from all parts of Palestine including Decapolis, the region of the Ten Greek Cities east of the Jordan. No political campaign was equal to this outpouring of the people to hear Jesus and to be healed by Jesus. (INT--#1)

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5. Read Mark 1:39
(1) No reference

Mark 1:39

- 39 So he went into their synagogues, preaching and driving out demons throughout the whole of Galilee.

Verse 39:

Mark’s view was that Jesus was eager to cover all Galilee and that he cast out devils (demons), wherever he went. (IB)

Throughout all Galilee. The first tour of Galilee by Jesus. We are told little about this great preaching tour. (INT--#1)

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6. Read Luke 4:44
(1) No reference

Luke 4:44

- 44 And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

In the synagogues of Judea: instead of Judea, which is the best reading of the manuscript tradition, the Byzantine text tradition and other manuscripts read "Galilee," a reading that harmonizes Luke with Matthew 4:23 and Mark 1:39. Up to this point Luke has spoken only of a ministry of Jesus in Galilee. Luke may be using Judea to refer to the land of Israel, the territory of the Jews, and not to a specific portion of it. (NAB)

Verse 44:

Some manuscripts read “of Galilee”. Jesus is actually in Galilee, and Luke knows it (4:14, 31). For him, however, the holy land, chosen by God for the manifestation and completion of world salvation, is Judea and especially Jerusalem. Jesus’ messianic works, though technically occurring in Galilee at this time, can be described theologically as happening in “Judea.” (JBC)

Luke often uses “Judea” for Palestine (1:5; 6:17; 7:17; 23:5; Acts 10:37) and

would seem to do so here. He may have wished to correct Mark's picture of a ministry that was strictly limited at the outset to Galilee. (IB)

Was preaching--describing his first tour of Galilee in accord with the purpose just stated. One must fill in details, though Mark 1:39, and Matthew 8:23-25 which tells of the mass of work done on this campaign. (INT--#1)

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d. CLEANSING OF A LEPER

Luke 5:12-16

Mark 1:40-45

Matthew 8:2-4

7. Read Luke 5:12-16 entirely through one time.
(1) Matthew 8:2-4 (2) Mark 1:40-45
8. Read Luke 5:12-13
(1) No reference
9. Read Luke 5:14
(1) Leviticus 14:2-32 (3) Luke 8:56
(2) Mark 7:36

Luke 5:12-16

- 12 Now there was a man full of leprosy in one of the towns where he was; and when he saw Jesus, he fell prostrate, pleaded with him, and said, "Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean."
- 13 Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, "I do will it. Be made clean." And the leprosy left him immediately.
- 14 Then he ordered him not to tell anyone, but "Go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them."
- 15 The report about him spread all the more, and great crowds assembled to listen to him and to be cured of their ailments,
- 16 but he would withdraw to deserted places to pray.

Luke's opening phrases are not only characteristically biblical in style, in imitation of the LXX, but they link this event with 4:43. Mark 1:39 seems to place the event in the open country where a man in the advanced stages of a highly contagious skin disease is more likely to be encountered (Leviticus 13:45f.). Throughout the Gospels Jesus meets lepers only in the central district of Samaria or Galilee. For the leper to come to Jesus is a manifestation of faith in Jesus' power to cure. Mark states that Jesus "was angry" at meeting him; yet many manuscripts read "moved with compassion" rather than angry. Not only is "angry" a more difficult reading and therefore less likely to be a scribal correction, but Luke would have taken up the word "compassion" if he had found it in Mark. Here as elsewhere, Luke edits out of his source any expression of Jesus' strong emotion. In the present episode, Luke also removes most of the direct discourse to

produce a smoother but less personal account. (JBC)

[One possible solution to Mark that of “Jesus was angry” could very well be that the anger Jesus experienced was not directed toward the leper himself, but to the disease as well as to the legal authorities who placed endless social discriminations upon the leper. In other words, if Jesus experienced any anger, it would not have been directed at the leper because he sought help from Jesus -- this is not in the character of Jesus to have done so.]

Verses 12-14:

As it is described in Leviticus 13, “leprosy” was a term that covered a variety of ulcerous diseases, some of them curable. The leper was expected to separate himself and to cry “Unclean, unclean” as a warning to others of his condition (Leviticus 13:45-46). Not until a priest had pronounced him “clean” and he had made the prescribed offerings, could he be readmitted to society (Leviticus 14:1-32). Jesus **touched** the leper as part of the healer’s technique. (IB)

Go and show yourself to the priest is a command that is repeated in 17:14, the only other story in the Gospels about the healing of lepers. **An offering for ... cleansing** would have to be made by the officiating priest in the temple at Jerusalem. Like most other miracle stories, it served originally to satisfy the widespread interest of early Christians in Jesus’ activities as a wonder-worker. (IB)

Verse 12:

you can make me clean -- The leper did not ask to be cured but rather to be cleansed; this feeling reflects the entire biblical tradition that the most poignant sorrow about leprosy was the lonely despair in being excluded from the community. Only a person ceremonially clean could take part in community services and assemblies. (JBC)

Verse 13:

stretched out his hand -- The Greek word used here almost always occurs in the LXX in a hostile sense of God’s hand outstretched to punish; but the idea of God’s outstretched hand or arm became a cliché for God’s redeeming power at the Exodus (Exodus 6:6; 14:16; 15:12; Jeremiah 17:5). (JBC)

Verse 14:

not to tell anyone -- Mark makes a great deal of the “Messianic Secret” and accuses the cured leper of disobedience for not following the order; Luke does not press the point. (JBC)

show yourself to the priest -- Another instance of Jesus’ compliance with the Mosaic Law (cf. Matthew 5:17; Leviticus 14:1-32). (JBC)

Verses 15-16:

According to Luke, Jesus **withdrew to the wilderness** to escape the throng of petitioners. Mark appears to assume that he was already “in the country” where people flocked to him “from every quarter.” Luke again emphasizes that Jesus prayed at a crisis in his ministry. (IB)

Verse 16:

withdraw to deserted places to pray -- While Mark insinuates that Jesus was forced to flee into deserted area in case the excitable people rioted in a political messianic movement, Luke stresses that Jesus’ withdrawal for prayer was spontaneous and continued. Through prayer he gained what people sought from him. (JBC)

Summary from LToJC:

Whatever remedies (medical, magical, or sympathetic) rabbinic writings may indicate for various kinds of disease, leprosy is not included in their catalogues. They left aside what even the OT marked as moral death, by enjoining those so stricken to avoid all contact with the living, and even to bear the appearance of mourners. As the leper passed by, his clothes rent, his hair disheveled, and the lower part of his face and his upper lip covered, it was as if one was going to his own death and reading his own burial-service. The mournful words “Unclean! Unclean!” he uttered proclaimed that his was both living and moral death. The isolation which banished lepers from all intercourse except with those similarly stricken, and forbid them to enter not only the temple, but even Jerusalem itself and any other walled city, could not have been merely prompted by the wish to prevent infection, rather it was prompted by their concept of “uncleanness.” For all the laws in regard to leprosy are expressly stated not to have application in the case of heathens, proselytes before their conversion, and even of Israelites on their birth. Neither was priestly examination and subsequent isolation of the leper to be commenced during the marriage-week or other festive days, since, evidently, infection would have most likely spread in such circumstances.

Rabbinism confessed itself powerless in the presence of this living death. Although the sacrificial ritual for the cleansed person implies the possibility of cure, in every instance the cure itself is traced to the direct agency of God. The possibility of any cure through human agency was never contemplated by the Jews. Not only did they never suggest the cure of a leper, but its treatment of those sufferers presents a most marked contrast between them and Jesus.

Only a descendant of Aaron could formally pronounce clean or unclean. Once declared leprous, the sufferer was soon made to feel the utter heartlessness of Rabbinism. In the OT the greatest stress is laid on “clean” and “unclean” in its rites and institutions. It mentions eleven principle kinds of defilement. In the rabbinic code, the Mishnic section about “clean and unclean” is the largest and most intricate of all. Its provisions touched, and interfered, more than any others, with every department of life.

In the elaborate code of defilements leprosy was not only one of “the fathers of uncleanness”, but, next to the defilement from the dead, it stood foremost among them. Not merely actual contact with the leper, but even his entrance defiled a habitation and everything in it, including the beams of the roof. Rabbinic harshness carried its provisions to the utmost sequences of an unbending logic. Their real un-spirituality appears most clearly, when we remember how special diseases were traced to particular sins. Rabbinism loved to trace disease to moral causes. In regard to leprosy, tradition held that since leprosy attached itself to the house, the dress, or the person, these were to be regarded as always requiring heavier strokes. Eleven sins are mentioned of which the tongue is the origin, and leprosy is pre-eminently among them.

One might have expected Divine compassion would have been extended to those who bore such heavy burdens of their sins. Instead of this, their burdens were needlessly increased. As the leper passed by, his cry “Unclean!” was meant to incite others to pray for him--but it also provoked them into avoiding him. No one was to salute him; his bed was to be low, inclining toward the ground. If he even put his head into a place, that place became unclean. No less than a distance of six feet was required to be kept from a

leper; or if there was a wind coming from the direction of the leper, then a hundred feet distance was not even considered sufficient. Rabbi Meir would not eat an egg if it had been purchased in a street where there was a leper. Another Rabbi boasted, that he always threw stones at lepers to keep them far off, while others hid themselves or ran away. To such extent did Rabbinism carry its inhuman logic in considering the leper as a mourner, that it even forbid the leper to wash his face.

In some measure, we can appreciate the contrast between Jesus and his contemporaries in his bearing towards the leper. We can judge by the healing of this leper of the impression which Jesus would have made upon the people. The leper would have fled from a rabbi, but he came in lowliest attitude of entreaty to Jesus. There was no OT precedent for it; not even in the case of Moses, nor that of Elisha, and there was certainly no Jewish expectancy of it. To have heard Jesus teach, to have seen or known him as healing all manner of disease, must have carried to the heart the conviction of his absolute power. One can understand this lowly reverence of approach, this cry which has so often since has been wrung from those who have despaired of all other help: *"Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean."* It is not a prayer, but it is faith in his power, and absolute committal to him of our helpless, hopeless need. And Jesus, touched with compassion, willed it. It almost seems, as if it were in the very exuberance of power that Jesus, acting in so direct flouting of Jewish usage, touched the leper. It was fitting that Jesus should surprise the Jewish leper by touching, even by His Word he had cleansed him. So experience always finds in Christ the real that is far beyond the ideal.

It is not quite so easy at first sight to understand why Jesus should with such intense earnestness, almost like vehemence, have sent the healed man away. Some versions read: "he ... cast him out." It was certainly not because he disapproved of the leper's worship. Rather it seems that he shrank from the fame that was connected with his miracles. This was not the way in which the Kingdom of Heaven was to be preached and advanced. It would have been the way of a Jewish Messiah, and it would have led up to his royal proclamation by the population. As we study the character of Christ, no contrast seems more glaring than that of such a scene. When despite Jesus' charge to the healed leper to keep silence, it was nevertheless all the more made known by him. It could scarcely have remained entirely unknown. Jesus could no longer enter the cities, but remained without in deserted places, where the people came to him from every quarter. And it was in that withdrawal that he spoke, healed, and prayed.

It is suggested that there might be another motive in Christ's conduct. His injunction of silence was combined with that of presenting himself to the priest and conforming to the ritual requirements of the Mosaic law in such cases. His conforming to the Mosaic Ritual was to be "a testimony to them." Jesus certainly did not wish to have the Law of Moses broken. And it would have been broken, not superseded, if its provisions had been infringed before he brought their fulfillment in his death, ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The course of this history shows that the open rupture between Jesus and the Jewish authorities was to lead to practical sequences. On the part of the Jewish authorities, it led to measures of active hostility. The synagogues of Galilee are no longer the quiet scenes of his teaching and miracles--his words and deeds no longer passed unchallenged. It had never occurred to these Galileans, as they implicitly surrendered

themselves to the power of his words, to question their orthodoxy. Now, immediately after this occurrence, we find him accused him of blasphemy. They had not thought it as a breach of God's law when, on that Sabbath, he had healed in the synagogue of Capernaum and in the home of Simon; but after this it became sinful to extend the same kind of mercy on the Sabbath--as we will see when we study the case of the withered hand. They had never thought of questioning the condescension of his intercourse with the poor and needy; but now they sought to sap the commencing allegiance of his disciples by charging him with undue intercourse with publicans and sinners, and by inciting against him even the prejudices and doubts of the half-enlightened followers of his own forerunner. All these new incidents are due to one and the same cause--the presence and hostile watchfulness of the Scribes and Pharisees, who now for the first time appear on the scene of his ministry. It is only logical thinking when we infer that immediately after that unknown feast at Jerusalem, the Jewish authorities had sent an informal deputation into Galilee after Jesus, and that it was due to their presence and influence that the opposition to Jesus now increasingly appeared.

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10. Read Mark 1:40-45 entirely through one time.
(1) Matthew 8:2-4 (2) Luke 5:12-14
11. Read Mark 1:40
(1) No reference
12. Read Mark 1:41
(1) Mark 5:30
13. Read Mark 1:42
(1) Luke 17:14
14. Read Mark 1:43
(1) No reference
15. Read Mark 1:44
(1) Leviticus 14:2-32
16. Read Mark 1:45
(1) No reference

Mark 1:40-45

- 40 A leper came to him (and kneeling down) begged him and said, "If you wish, you can make me clean."
- 41 Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched him, and said to him, "I do will it. Be made clean."
- 42 The leprosy left him immediately, and he was made clean.
- 43 Then, warning him sternly, he dismissed him at once.

- 44 Then he said to him, "See that you tell no one anything, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them."
- 45 The man went away and began to publicize the whole matter. He spread the report abroad so that it was impossible for Jesus to enter a town openly. He remained outside in deserted places, and people kept coming to him from everywhere.

No date or place is given for this healing. Mark inserts it here as an example of Jesus' activity on his tour "throughout all Galilee." It is a difficult narrative: Jesus' compassion gives way to sternness (verse 43; the Greek means literally "being very angry with him"). Is it possible that Jesus resented the man's bold approach which was forbidden to a leper (Leviticus 13:45), and his impetuous demand, implying a possible refusal. *If you will?* Some scholars have suggested that the statement of his cure (verse 41-42) is introduced too early in the story. Other scholars have suggested that the narrative is a conflation of two stories with similar subjects. If the last of these suggestions is correct, it is possible that in one of the stories the man was to be cleansed as he went (as in Luke 17:14). (IB)

As it stands, the story relates four stages: (1) the man's approach and request for healing; (2) Jesus' response and cure of the leper; (3) the command to show himself to the priest (presumably in Jerusalem); and (4) the man's disobedience and its consequences. It may be that Mark's naïve telling of the story anticipates, by the phrase in verse 43, "being very angry with him," Jesus' resentment at his disobedience. If so, the theory of conflation becomes unnecessary. In effect, the softening of the expression in our English version -- "tell no one anything", or as in other versions "sternly charged him"--achieves this end, and the story moves consistently from stage to stage. (IB)

Verse 40:

a leper -- This miracle illustrates Jesus' power to save even those excluded from Israel by the Mosaic Law. (JBC)

The evangelist certainly understood the words "make me clean" to involve a miracle, as in the story of Naaman (II Kings 5), not a mere certification of cleansing already accomplished; it was the function of the priest to provide certification of cleansing. (IB)

Verses 41-42:

Biblical "leprosy" was a term derived from common usage, as the OT shows. Popular diagnosis included in the category not only true leprosy, but also various skin diseases, and even mildew on walls and in culinary vessels. Modern physicians in the Orient have observed several types, one of them being a nervous imitation of true leprosy. What the man in our story had it is impossible to say; even the hysterical variety was painful enough. (IB)

Verse 41:

Moved with pity -- Some versions read "moved with anger." Most manuscripts, however, read "moved with pity." Jesus' anger was probably directed against the leprous spirit. (JBC)

Verse 43:

dismissed him -- That is, the demon. The present form of the story is probably a

conflation of two earlier accounts, one of which depicted Jesus' pity (1:42) and the other his anger (1:44a) in accord with the Messianic secret. The rest of 1:44 refers to Leviticus 13 - 14); by showing Jesus' regard for the Mosaic Law it sets the stage for the controversies in 2:1 - 3:6. (JBC)

Verse 44:

The offering to made by the leper is described in Leviticus 14. The "testimony unto them" was no doubt understood by Mark to mean the proof to the priests--not to the people--that the man was healed. In all probability the priest would also issue a certificate in writing, so that the whole procedure was in accordance with religious rite and legal custom. (IB)

Verse 45:

went away -- Some versions read: "he went away". Theoretically, the subject may have been either Jesus or the cured man. It is most likely the latter, and Mark is making a subtle catechetical point: those cleansed by Christ in baptism must "proclaim" and "spread the word"-- a technical term for the Gospel coined by the primitive church (Mark 4:15-20; 16:20; Acts 4:4). (JBC)

Jesus' intention to preach in the surrounding villages (verse 38) was frustrated by the man's disobedience; instead, "people came to him from every quarter," presumably for healing or exorcism, rather than to hear the gospel. Mark may also imply that despite hindrances Jesus' mission proceeded. (IB)

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17. Read Matthew 8:2-4 entirely through one time.

(1) No reference

18. Read Matthew 8:2-3

(1) No reference

19. Read Matthew 8:4

(1) Leviticus 14:2-32

(2) Luke 17:14

Matthew 8:2-4

2 And then a leper approached, did him homage, and said, "Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean."

3 He stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, "I will do it. Be made clean." His leprosy was cleansed immediately.

4 Then Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one, but go show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them."

This passage illustrates how Matthew normally abbreviates the narratives of Mark by the omission of picturesque details. In Matthew the incident takes place in a location between the site of the "sermon on the mount" and Capernaum; in Mark and Luke it is placed somewhere in Galilee. Matthew, because the incident follows the sermon, makes mention of a crowd with Jesus. (JBC)

Some scholars infer that in the original story behind Mark 1:40-45 the healing was not instantaneous but was expected to occur while the leper was on his way to the priest. It would then resemble the stories of Naaman (II Kings 5:1-4) and of the ten lepers (Luke 17:12-14). (IB)

Verse 2:

Leprosy is loosely used throughout the Bible for unspecified skin diseases which were as common in the Near East of NT times as they are today. The type of disease is not pertinent to the miraculous character of the cure; eczema seems no easier to heal by a touch than is leprosy. (JBC)

The biblical law concerning a leper is found in Leviticus 13 - 14; Deuteronomy 24:8. The affliction was common enough in Palestine for an entire tractate in the Mishnah to be devoted to it. The rabbis usually regarded it as a direct punishment for various sins, and although the law presupposes that it was curable, they said that its healing was as difficult as the raising of the dead. Lepers were not shunned merely for fear of contagion; contact with them rendered the holy people of Israel unclean (Leviticus 13:45-46). Biblical leprosy includes several skin diseases variously identified as contagious ringworm, psoriasis, leucoderma, and vitiligo (see Leviticus 13:30). Since it was thought also to attack clothing and the walls of buildings (Leviticus 13:47; 14:34), "leprosy" may often have been due to a fungus. The disease now called leprosy, Hansen's disease, (or *Elephantiasis Graecorum*) was perhaps known in ancient Egypt, but is not referred to here. If the leper came to Jesus, it was probably outdoors, for the mere entrance of a leper into a house polluted everything in it. The words "if you will" do not necessarily imply that the leper thought Jesus unwilling to heal. He speaks to Jesus as if he were a wonder-worker whom he wishes to please with compliments. (IB)

Verse 3:

"I will do it. Be made clean." -- All three Gospels retain the formula in which the words of Jesus echo the petition of the sick man; faith is not mentioned in the narrative, but the brevity of the petition and the instant echo of the answer illustrate the faith of the sick man and the healing power of Jesus. Both Matthew and Luke omit the words that express the emotional reaction of Jesus: "feeling compassion" (Mark 1:41) and "angered" (1:43). Indeed Mark 1:43 must have been as unintelligible to Matthew and Luke as it is to modern readers; the verse surely reflects the constructive work of Mark, and the original form of the story must have represented the leprosy as the work of a demon. It is the demon and not the sufferer who is the object of the anger of Jesus and who is expelled in Mark. The precept of silence is important in Mark; it is a part of that pattern called "the Messianic Secret." Matthew and Luke retain the precept, even though the pattern of the secret is not an essential part of their Gospels. Matthew consequently omits Mark's notice that the secret was not kept. (JBC)

Stretching out the hand and touching were familiar gestures of healing (II Kings 5:11; Mark 8:22-23). Touching the leper would have made Jesus unclean, according to the law. Immediate cleansing of leprosy, even in its milder forms, would be supernatural (Exodus 4:6-7; Numbers 12:9-14). (IB)

Verse 4:

show yourself to the priest -- The appearance of the leper before the priest with an offering to certify his cure is prescribed in Leviticus 14:2-9. (JBC)

See that you tell no one -- Mark, from whom these words come, probably thought that Christ's messiah-ship must remain secret. If Jesus gave this order, it was because he did not wish to be surrounded by a curious crowd looking for displays of miraculous power. Jesus respected the functions of the priests; and the man could not be restored to normal social relationships until he was publicly declared clean, therefore the command "show yourself to the priest" that is, the officiating priest. The purification ceremony could be performed only in Jerusalem. "The gift that Moses commanded" consisted of two birds, one of which was slain and the other released as part of the disinfection ceremony (Leviticus 14:4-7). "Unto them": We should expect "to him" instead of "to them". Who are "those" that are spoken of in the plural? Perhaps Jesus' critics, although the story has not mentioned them; it has been conjectured that "the people" in general is meant. (IB)

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e. THE GREAT CATCH OF FISH

Luke 5:1-11

20. Read Luke 5:1-11 entirely through one time.
(1) Matthew 4:18, 16 (2) Mark 1:32-34
21. Read Luke 5:1-3
(1) Matthew 13:1-2 (3) Mark 3:9-10
(2) Mark 2:13 (4) Mark 4:1-2
22. Read Luke 5:4-9
(1) John 21:1-11
23. Read Luke 5:10
(1) Jeremiah 16:16
24. Read Luke 5:11
(1) Matthew 19:27

Luke 5:1-11

- 1 While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret.
- 2 He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets.
- 3 Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.
- 4 After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch."
- 5 Simon said in reply, "Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught

- nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets."
- 6 When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing.
- 7 They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that they were in danger of sinking.
- 8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man."
- 9 For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him,
- 10 and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."
- 11 When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

Overview from JBC:

Although the account of the Galilean ministry (4:14 - 9:50) rather carefully follows Mark's master-gospel, Luke does not place the call of Peter before the day at Capernaum (as happens rather abruptly in Mark); instead he composes his own account of Peter's vocation and introduces a more orderly arrangement of events (1:3). One scholar has recognized the symmetry: call of the leading disciples (5:1-11); two healings that provoke controversy (5:12-16, 17-26); call of another disciple (5:27-39); two incidents on the Sabbath that stir new controversy (6:1-11); naming of the twelve (6:12-16).

Luke's account is either a composition that he prepared from various sources (which is the most probable, since the section is exceptionally heavy with Luke's own style of writing), or else the result of oral transmission with details of different stories intermingled. The description of the place (5:1-3) corresponds to Mark 4:1f., but then Mark proceeds with the parable of the sower. The story of the miracle (5:4-10a) contains many points of similarity (and difference!) with the post-resurrection account in John 21:1-11. The call of Simon (5:10b-11) reminds us of Mark 1:17, 20. It seems very unlikely that Peter would have forgotten, or Mark overlooked, the miraculous draught of fish if such a wonder had occurred at the momentous time of Peter's vocation. Just as the Nazareth incident prefigured the rejection of Jesus by his own and the Capernaum account prefigured his enthusiastic reception by outsiders, the vocation of Peter is told in such a way as to symbolize the great number of Gentile converts in the Messianic community.

Overview from IB:

Luke had omitted Mark's account of the call of Simon and his associates to discipleship (Mark 1:16-20) but now, at a later point in the sequence of events, he inserts this variant. The story makes no mention of Andrew.

Verse 1:

the lake of Gennesaret -- The other evangelists speak of the Sea of Galilee, but Luke more properly calls it a lake (for it is a small, pear-shaped body of water, 13 miles long and 7 ½ miles side, with fresh, cool water, abounding with fish). (JBC)

Gennesaret -- The name is derived from that of the plain just northwest of the lake. One scholar has recognized a special theological meaning in the "lake." Just as the "mountain" is the favorite setting for communication with the Father in Luke, so the lake

provides a place for manifestations of power. (JBC)

Verses 1-3:

In Luke “the word of God” is Jesus’ own preaching (8:11, 21; 11:28); in Acts it is the apostolic message (Acts 4:31; 6:2). “The lake of Gennesaret” is a name derived from the plain that lies to the south of Capernaum (Matthew 14:34; Mark 6:53), a designation peculiar in the NT to Luke, and more accurate than Mark’s “sea” (cf. Josephus Antiquities. XVIII. 2. 1). According to Luke, Simon had been associated with Jesus for some time before the formal call. (IB)

Verse 5:

Master -- Master is a favorite title for Jesus in Luke, replacing the Hebrew “rabbi.” Although the men had worked exhaustively throughout the night, Peter will let down the net “on the strength of Jesus’ “word.” (JBC)

Verse 8:

Lord -- The change from “Master” to “Lord” reflects Peter’s religious fear before the awesome presence of the divine. (JBC)

Verses 4-9:

The story of the miraculous catch of fish has a parallel in John 21:3-14, where it appears to foreshadow the success of the later Christian mission and is associated with the senior disciple’s rehabilitation after disgrace. In Luke’s source, or in the oral form in which the story reached the evangelist, it may also have been a post-resurrection narrative with some similar symbolical purpose. But Luke has obscured this by making the miracle the occasion for Peter’s call. The temptation to allegorize Luke’s version must be resisted. Whatever the original symbolism in Luke’s source--and in John’s version--Luke’s fish are fish, not Christian converts. “Master” appears six times in Luke as a title for Jesus. Non-disciples use the word “teacher.” The “great shoal of fish” numbers “a hundred and fifty-three” in John 21:11. “Their partners in the other boat” are the sons of Zebedee (verse 10), but need not have been specified in the original story. “Simon Peter” occurs nowhere else in Luke as a double name. One codex omits the nickname and its reading may be original. In that case “Peter” is first used in 6:14. (IB)

“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord” may originally have presupposed the story of Peter’s denial. In its present setting it is an expression of dismay evoked by the supernatural. “Lord” as a title for Jesus appears twenty-one times in Luke. Twelve of the instances are in material peculiar to Luke’s Gospel. (IB)

Verse 10:

Distinct from Mark 1:17f., where Jesus addresses Andrew as well as Simon and a little later James and John; this section of Luke portrays Jesus, speaking exclusively to Peter: “from this moment forward you (in the singular) will be catching men.” (JBC)

from now on -- some versions read “this moment”. This phrase is heavily underlined in the Greek; it implies a crisis in Peter’s life (cf. the same phrase in 1:48b). Peter will be catching men in order to save their lives, rather than fish to be consumed at a family dinner; the future tense of the verb plus the participle assign Peter to a lifelong vocation. Writing after 70 A.D., Luke infers that Peter’s leadership will never be vacated in favor of anyone else, including James, as some scholars maintain because of Acts 10. (JBC)

Verse 11:

brought their boats to the shore -- The verb “brought” forms an elegant conclusion to the introductory word in verse 3 “to put out from the shore.” (JBC)

they left everything -- Luke’s addition to the other Gospels, for he writes the Gospel of Absolute Renouncement. Luke makes the call to an apostolic vocation all the more heroic and single-minded on this occasion of an abundant catch of fish. (JBC)

Verses 10-11:

Although the “sons of Zebedee” are also mentioned in John 21:2, they appear to have been introduced into this narrative--rather unskillfully--in order to adapt it to Mark 1:19. “Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men” is Luke’s substitute for the invitation in Mark 1:17. Simon alone is addressed, but as in Mark 1:20, his “partners” also “left everything and followed” Jesus. One codex smooths out such roughness by rewriting both verses: “James and John, sons of Zebedee, were his partners. He said to them: ‘Do not remain ordinary fishermen. Come and let me make you fishers of men!’ And when they heard the invitation, they left everything on land and followed him.” (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

It had probably been a night of storms on the lake. The toil of the fishermen had brought them no draught of fish, and they stood by the shore, or in the boats drawn up on the beach, casting in their nets to “wash them” of the sand and pebbles, with which such a night’s work would clog them, or to mend what had been torn by the violence of the storm.

We can picture to ourselves, on that bright autumn morning, after a stormy night of fruitless toil, the busy scene by the lake, with the fishermen cleaning and mending their nets. While at work, they would scarcely have noticed a gathering crowd. They probably did not even see Jesus until he spoke to them, and then got into their boats with them.

The boat had been thrust out a little from the land, and over the soft ripple of waters came the strange melody of his word. We need scarcely ask what words he spoke. It would be of the Father, of the Kingdom, and of those who entered it, especially those who were heavily burdened. Peter heard it all as he sat close by in the shadow of the Master. Could he ever hope with endless toil to be a successful fisher of men? Jesus had read Peter’s thoughts, and much more than read them. It was all needed for the qualifying of Peter especially, but also of the others who had been called to be fishers of men. Presently it would all be brought to light. This is another object in Christ’s miracles to his disciples--to make clear their inmost thoughts and longings, and point them to the right goal. "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch." That they had toiled in vain all night, only teaches the need of another beginning. Peter’s response “at your command I will lower the nets” marks the new trust, and the new work as springing from that trust. Already “the net was breaking” when they beckoned for their partners in the other ship to come and help them. Now both boats were burdened to the water’s edge.

What could all of this have meant to Simon Peter? He had been called to full discipleship, and he had obeyed the call. He had been in his boat beside the Savior, and he had heard what he had spoken, and it had gone to his heart. Now there was this miracle which he had just witnessed! Such a great catch of fish in one spot on that Lake of Galilee was not strange. The miraculous was that the Lord had seen through those waters down to where the multitude of fish were, and had bid them to let their nets down for the catch. He could see through the intervening waters right down to the bottom of

that sea; and He could also see through him, to the very bottom of Peter's heart.

Many are the truths which shine out from the symbolism of this scene. The call itself; the boat; the command of Jesus, despite the night of vain toil; the unlikely success; the net and its cast at the bid of Jesus, with the absolute certitude of result, where he is and when he bids; the miraculous direction to the spot; the multitude of fish caught; the net about to break, yet not breaking; the surprise, as strange perhaps as the miracle itself; and then finally the lesson of self-knowledge and humiliation; all these and much more has the church most truly read in this history. And [when they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.](#)

Session 6

Summary from LToJC:

Of the second journey of Jesus in Galilee no other special event is recorded other than the healing of the leper. It seems to indicate, that this one miracle had been selected for a special purpose. The healing of leprosy was recorded as typical. This agrees with what immediately follows. As Rabbinism stood confessedly powerless in face of the living death of leprosy, it also had no word of forgiveness to speak to the conscience that was burdened with sin, nor even a word of welcome to the sinner. This was the inmost meaning of the two events which the Gospel-history places next to the healing of the leper: the forgiveness of sins in the case of the paralytic, and the welcome to the chief of sinners in the call of Levi-Matthew.

It is also noteworthy that the account in Mark's Gospel confirms that by John's Gospel of what had occurred at the "unknown feast" in Jerusalem. If we establish the truthworthiness of the narrative in John 5, which is unconfirmed by any of the Synoptists, we strengthen not only the evidence in favor of John's Gospel generally, but that in one of its points of chief difficulty, since such an advanced teaching on the part of Jesus, and such developed hostility from the Jewish authorities, might scarcely have been looked for at so early a stage. When we compare the language of Mark with that of the 5th chapter of John, at least four points of contact prominently appear. (1) The unspoken charge of the Scribes that in forgiving sins Jesus blasphemed by making himself equal with God. This has its exact counterpart in the similar charge against him in John 5:18, which kindled in them the wish to kill Jesus. (2) As in the case of John 5, the final reply of Jesus pointed to "the authority" which the Father had given him for divine administration on earth, now the healing of the paralytic was to show the Scribes that he had "authority for the dispensation upon earth of the forgiveness of sins, which the Jews rightly regarded as the Divine prerogative. (3) The words which Jesus spoke to the paralytic: "Rise, take up your bed and walk," are to the letter the same which are recorded as used by Him when he healed the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda. (4) When Jesus addressed to the Scribes at the healing of the paralytic, and at the unknown feast, he made final appeal to his works as evidence that he had been sent by, and had received of, the Father "the authority" to which he laid claim. It would be utterly irrational to regard these as coincidences, and not references. Their evidential force becomes even stronger, as we remember that entire absence of design on the part of Mark. This correspondence not only supports the trustworthiness of the two independent narratives in Mark and John, but it also confirms the historical order in which these events have been arranged in this study, and the suggestion that after the encounter at the unknown feast, the authorities of Jerusalem had sent representatives to watch, oppose, and if possible, entrap Jesus.

The second journey of Jesus through Galilee had commenced in Autumn; the return to Capernaum was "after days" which, in common Jewish phraseology, meant a considerable interval. It was most likely in the winter months that Christ returned to Capernaum. No sooner had the people learned that he was at home that so many flocked to the dwelling of Peter, which we assume to have been the temporary home of Jesus. The crowds filled its limited space to overflowing, and even to crowd out the door and beyond it. The general impression in our minds is, that this audience was in a state of

indecision rather than being of sympathy with Jesus. It included Pharisees and doctors of the Law, who had come on purpose from the towns of Galilee, from Judea, and from Jerusalem, and their influence must have been felt by the people. Although irresistibly attracted by Jesus, an element of curiosity, if not of doubt, would mingle with their feelings as they looked at the leaders, to whom long habit attached the most superstitious veneration.

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f. HEALING OF A PARALYTIC

Mark 2:1-12

Luke 5:17-26

Matthew 9:1-8

1. Read Mark 2:1-12 entirely through one time.
(1) Matthew 9:2-8 (2) Luke 5:18-26
2. Read Mark 2:1-6
(1) No reference
3. Read Mark 2:7
(1) Isaiah 43:25
4. Read Mark 2:8-12
(1) No reference

Mark 2:1-12

- 1 When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it became known that he was at home.
- 2 Many gathered together so that there was no longer room for them, not even around the door, and he preached the word to them.
- 3 They came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men.
- 4 Unable to get near Jesus because of the crowd, they opened up the roof above him. After they had broken through, they let down the mat on which the paralytic was lying.
- 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Child, your sins are forgiven."
- 6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there asking themselves,
- 7 "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming. Who but God alone can forgive sins?"
- 8 Jesus immediately knew in his mind what they were thinking to themselves, so he said, "Why are you thinking such things in your hearts?
- 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, pick up your mat and walk'?
- 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on

- earth"--
- 11 he said to the paralytic, "I say to you, rise, pick up your mat, and go home."
12 He rose, picked up his mat at once, and went away in the sight of everyone. They were all astounded and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."

Overview from JBC:

This section serves to show the growing opposition to Jesus, leading to the Pharisees' plot in Mark 3:6. The episode of the paralytic may refer to a single incident in Jesus' ministry, or it may have been conflated from a miracle story (verses 3-5, 11-12) and a pronouncement story (verses 6-10) by the association of the forgiveness of sins with faith (Acts 10:43; 13:38-39). The main difficulty lies in verse 10, which contains a grammatical irregularity of not completing one sentence before beginning another. There is a shift in the persons addressed and this breaks the unity of the passage. It is surprising, moreover, in view of Mark's presentation of the Messianic secret, that Jesus should have disclosed himself so early in his ministry as the Son of Man with authority to forgive sins, the more so since this disclosure is made to hostile scribes (cf. 8:11-13). It is possible, however, that verse 10 is not a saying of Jesus, but a parenthetical comment of the Church addressed to the Christian readers of the Gospel and explicating for them the significance of the healing. In that case the passage would form a perfect literary unity in which Jesus establishes the effectiveness of his forgiving word not by a verbal claim but by a miracle whose import is accessible to those with faith.

Overview from IB:

With this passage begins a new block of material in Mark, the first series of controversies (2:1 - 3:6, with an additional controversy, perhaps from Q from 3:20-30). It represents the growing opposition to Jesus on the part of the scribes, the official teachers of Jewish religion, and the Pharisees, the lay devotees and enthusiasts for the scribal interpretation of religion. It has been suggested that the opening controversy (verses 5b-10) has been inserted into the story of the paralytic: the clause "he said to the paralytic" is repeated in verse 10 from verse 5. Certainly the story reads well enough without the "insertion," and apparently resembles, in that form, plenty of other healing narratives. But it lacks the dramatic quality of the present Marcan account. At the same time, Jesus' words in verse 5, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee" or "My son, your sins are forgiven"--seem irrelevant: the man was brought to Jesus for healing, not for forgiveness. But the irrelevancy exists only for modern thought. In the ancient world, sin and suffering were related as cause and consequence. The sick man will not get up from his sickness until all his sins have been forgiven (cf. James 5:15, 20). Jesus evidently shared the view (see Luke 13:1-5 -- John 9:3 is not to be cited in this connection, and in any event is clearly offset by John 5:14). Apparently Mark also shared the view. The man's sins were not necessarily of a kind to lead to paralysis; all sin deserved the penalty of sickness and pain. But in spite of these considerations, it is probable that verses 5b-10 are in insertion into an "old" episode which narrated a healing. Verse 12 takes no note of the inserted material. The original story may have been given in verses 1-5, and 12; Jesus pronounced the man's sins forgiven, and the result was his physical cure. Into this framework has been inserted the controversy material, verses 6-11.

Verse 1:

Capernaum was now Jesus' headquarters (cf. Luke 4:23). The house was probably Peter's (1:29), although Matthew 4:13 and John 2:12 may allow us to think that Jesus had his own house there. (IB)

The house door apparently opened into the street, not into a court as in the larger houses. The house was packed inside and there was a crowd outside. (INT-Robinson)

Verse 2:

Jesus teaches at home, not in the synagogue (1:39), and people come to him (1:45)--whether for healing or to hear the gospel is not said. (IB)

Verses 3-4:

The "paralytic" is let down through the roof. A village roof in Palestine was made of saplings laid flat, with branches and twigs spread over them, and clay patted down over this and baked in the sun. Mark may perhaps have thought of a Roman roof (as Luke did in 5:19). (IB)

Verse 4:

They climbed up a stairway on the outside or ladder to the flat tile roof and dug out or broke through the tiles (the roof). There were tiles of laths and plaster and even slabs of stone stuck in for strength that had to be dug out. It is not clear where Jesus was, either downstairs, or upstairs, or in the quadrangle. A composition of mortar, tar, ashes and sand is spread upon the roofs, and rolled hard, and grass grows in the crevices. On the houses of the poor in the country the grass grows more freely, and goats may be seen on the roofs cropping it. They let down the bed. The verb means to lower from a higher place. Probably the four men had a rope fastened to each corner of the pallet, or poor man's bed. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 3-5:

The essential point in these verses is the connection between the actor's faith and Jesus' declaration of forgiveness. Although Jesus' words may simply have meant "God has forgiven your sins" (cf. II Samuel 12:13), verse 7 and to show that they are reported here in the light of the church's Easter faith in Christ as the Lord with power to forgive sins personally. (JBC)

[saw their faith](#) -- Faith, the necessary prerequisite for a miracle (5:34 [cf. Matthew 13:58]; 9:23; 10:52), and essential demand of Jesus' preaching (1:15), could not, before the resurrection, have meant an act of belief in Christ as a divine person. The Evangelists, writing as Christian believers tend to color their writing in terms of the specifically Christian faith to which it was leading. During Jesus' ministry it would have meant a receptivity to God's healing word proclaimed by Jesus, together with a confident self-abandonment to God whose saving power was being exercised in and through Jesus. (JBC)

Verse 5:

It is the faith of the four friends that is rewarded; but presumably the man himself had faith too--perhaps urging his friends to bring him. Mark thinks of Jesus as not merely announcing the forgiveness of sins but actually pronouncing it; that is, forgiving the man. (IB)

The faith of the four men and of the man himself. There is no reason for excluding his faith. They all had confidence in the power and willingness of Jesus to heal

this desperate case. The astonishing thing both to the paralytic and to the four friends is that Jesus forgave his sins instead of healing him. The sins had probably caused the paralysis. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 6:

The scribes (and Pharisees, Luke 5:21) were there to cause trouble, to pick flaws in the teaching and conduct of Jesus. His popularity and power had aroused their jealousy. There is no evidence that they spoke aloud the murmur in their hearts, "within themselves" (Matthew 9:3). It was not necessary, for their looks gave them away and Jesus knew their thoughts (Matthew 9:4) and perceived their reasoning (Luke 5:22). The Master at once recognizes the hostile atmosphere in the house. The debate in their hearts was written on their faces. No sound had come, but feeling did. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 7:

blaspheming -- A foreshadowing of the condemnation in 14:60-64. (JBC)

The claim of authority to "forgive sins" is involved in Jesus' words to the paralytic, according to Mark, since they set Jesus in the place of God (cf. John 10:33; God alone could forgive sins, according to Isaiah 43:25); the penalty for blasphemy was death by stoning (Leviticus 24:16). The Jews did not expect even the Messiah to forgive sins; no man could do this. Nor was any human intermediary or any offering of sacrifice required; God forgives the penitent man's sins at once. It is difficult to see how the following proof of Jesus' authority to forgive sins--namely, the effectiveness of the healing--could have convinced the scribes of his messiah-ship; the logic, like the concept in verse 10, belongs to the "Son of man" theology of the early church rather than to Judaism. (IB)

This is the unspoken charge in their hearts which Jesus read like an open book. They justify the charge with the conviction that God alone has the power to forgive sins. The original Greek word for our English word "blasphemy" means injurious speech or slander. It was, they held, blasphemy for Jesus to assume this divine privilege. Their logic was correct. The only flaw in it was the possibility that Jesus held a special relation to God which justified his claim. So the two forces clash here as now on the deity of Jesus. Knowing full well that he had exercised the right of God in forgiving the man's sins he proceeds to justify his claim by healing the man. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 8-12:

"In his spirit" (cf. 5:30; 8:12): Mark may view Jesus' direct intuition as supernatural. It was obviously easier to utter idle words in the name of God than to enable a paralytic to walk--so the scribes are represented as thinking. Jesus proceeds to prove the validity of his words of forgiveness by the power of his words of healing. The whole inserted controversial section (verses 5b-10) reflects the arguments of the early church: if Jesus could cure a paralytic, and do other mighty works, he could certainly pronounce the divine forgiveness of sins (cf. John 3:2); and he does so, not as a prophet or emissary of God, or even as Messiah, but as "the Son of man," who "has authority on earth to forgive sins." Some manuscripts, perhaps to stress the Incarnation, read: "the Son of man on earth has authority." Verse 12 gives a typical conclusion to a miracle story, with no reference to the argument of the inserted controversy. (IB)

Verse 10:

that you may know -- This verse is a Christian editorial comment on Jesus'

miracle; the “you” cannot refer to the scribes. It is addressed to Christian readers to whom the miracle is being recounted. (JBC)

The scribes could have said either of the alternatives in verse 9 with equal futility. Jesus could say either with equal effectiveness. In fact Jesus chose the harder first, the forgiveness which they could not see. So he now performs the miracle of healing which all could see, that all could know that he really had the authority and power to forgive sins. He has the right and power here on earth to forgive sins, here and now without waiting for the day of judgment. This remarkable parenthesis in the middle of the sentence occurs also in Matthew 9:6 and Luke 5:24, proof that both Matthew and Luke followed Mark’s narrative. It is inconceivable that all three writers should independently have injected the same parenthesis at the same place. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 11:

I say to you, rise -- Jesus’ cure substantiates his claim of forgiving sins and symbolizes the spiritual health of the forgiven sinner. (JBC)

Verse 12:

were all astounded -- The amazed people fail to see the miracle as a sign of Jesus’ power to forgive sins (contrast Matthew 9:8)--another reason for thinking that verse 10 does not represent a saying uttered by Jesus on this occasion. (JBC)

He picked up his pallet and walked and went home as Jesus had commanded him to do in verse 11. It was an amazing proceeding and made it unnecessary for Jesus to refute the scribes further on this occasion. The amazement was too general and great for words. The people could only say: “We never saw it in this manner.” Jesus had acted with the power of God and claimed equality with God and had made good his claim. They all marveled at the impossibilities on that day. For it all, they glorified God. (INT--Robinson).

Summary from LToJC:

It is helpful to try and realize the scene. We can picture to ourselves Jesus “speaking the word” to that eager, interested crowd, which would soon become forgetful even of the presence of the watchful “scribes.” Although we know a good deal of the structure of Jewish houses, we feel it difficult to be sure of the exact place where Jesus was in the house on this occasion. Meetings for religious study and discussion were certainly held in the upper chamber. But that locale seems utterly unsuited to the requirements of the narrative.

Similar objections attach to the idea, that it was the front room of one of those low houses occupied by the poor. Nor is there any reason for supposing that the house occupied by Peter was one of those low buildings which formed the dwellings of the very poor. It must, at any rate, have contained besides a large family room, accommodation for Peter and his wife, for Peter’s mother-in-law, and for Jesus as the honored guest. The house of Peter could not have been a small one. We regard it as one of the better dwellings of the middle classes. In that case all the circumstances fully accord with the narrative in the Gospels. Jesus is speaking the word, standing in the covered gallery [or porch] that ran round the courtyard of such houses, and opened into the various apartments. Perhaps he was standing within the entrance of the guest-chamber, while the scribes were sitting within that apartment, or beside him in the gallery. The court before him was thronged, out into the street. All are absorbedly listening to the Master, when

suddenly those appear who are bearing a paralytic on his pallet. It had of late become too common a scene to see the sick thus carried to Jesus to attract special attention. And yet one can scarcely conceive that, if the crowd had merely filled an apartment and gathered around its door, it would not have made way for the sick, or that somehow the bearers could not have come within sight, or been able to attract the attention of Jesus. With a courtyard crowded out into the street, all this would be out of the question. In such circumstances, what was to be done? Access to Jesus was simply impossible. Inmost in the hearts of those who bore the paralyzed was the belief that Jesus could, and that he would, heal. They must have heard it from others; they must have witnessed it themselves in other instances. And inmost in the heart of the paralytic was, as we infer from the first words of Jesus to him, not only the same conviction, but with it weighed a terrible fear, born of Jewish beliefs, lest his sins might hinder his healing. And this would make him doubly anxious not to lose the present opportunity.

Their resolve was quicken taken. If they could not approach Jesus with their burden, they could let it down from above at his feet. Outside the house, as well as inside, a stair led up to the roof. They may have ascended it in this manner, or else reached it by what the Rabbis called "the road of the roofs," passing from roof to roof, if the house adjoined others in the same street. The roof itself, which had hard beaten earth or rubble underneath it, was paved with brick, stone, or any other hard substance, and surrounded by a balustrade which, according to Jewish law, was at least three feet high. It is scarcely possible to imagine, that the bearers of the paralytic would have attempted to dig through this into a room below, not to speak of the interruption and inconvenience caused to those below by such an operation. But no such objection attaches if we regard it, not as the main roof of the house, but as that of the covered gallery under which we are supposing Jesus to have stood. In such cases it would have been comparatively easy to "unroof" the covering of "tiles," and then, "having dug out" an opening through the lighter framework which supported the tiles, to let down their burden "into the midst before Jesus." As done by four strong men, all this would have been but the work of a few minutes. We can imagine here the arresting of the discourse of Jesus, and the breathless surprise of the crowd as this opening through the tiles appeared, and slowly a pallet was led down before them. Busy hands would help to steady it, and bring it safe to the ground. And on that pallet lay one paralyzed--his fevered face and glistening eyes upturned to Jesus.

It must have been a marvelous sight, even at a time and in circumstances when the marvelous might be said to have become an everyday occurrence. This energy and determination of faith exceeded everything that had been witnessed before. Jesus saw it, and he spoke. For, as yet, the blanched lips of the sufferer had not parted to utter his petition. He believed, indeed, in the power of Jesus to heal, with all the certitude that issued, not only in the determination to be laid at his feet, but at whatever trouble and in any circumstances, however novel or strange. It needed, indeed, faith to overcome all the hindrances in the present instance; and still more faith to be so absorbed and forgetful of all around, as to be let down from the roof through the broken tiling into the midst of such an assembly. And this open outburst of faith shone out the more brightly, from its contrast with the covered darkness and clouds of unbelief within the breasts of those scribes who had come to watch and ensnare Jesus.

As yet no one spoke, for the silence of expectancy had fallen on them all. Could he, and if he could, would he help--and what would he do? But he, who perceives man's unspoken thoughts, knew that there was not only faith, but also fear, in the heart of that man. Hence the first words, which Jesus spoke to him were: "Be of good cheer." He had, indeed, got beyond the course Judaic standpoint, from which suffering seemed an expiation of sin. Jewish ideas were even more deeply rooted. According to their way of thinking, recovery would not be granted to the sick unless his sins had first been forgiven him. It was this deepest, although, perhaps as yet only partially conscious, want of the sufferer before him, which Jesus met when, in words of tender kindness, he spoke forgiveness to his soul, and that not as something to come, but as an act already past: "Child, your sins have been forgiven." It seems as though he needed to speak these words, before he gave healing: needed, in the psychological order of things; needed, also, if the inward sickness was to be healed, and because the inward stroke, or paralysis, in the consciousness of guilt, must be removed, before the outward could be taken away.

In another sense there was a higher "need be" for the word which brought forgiveness, before that which gave healing. Let us recall that Jesus was in the presence of those in whom the scribes' pretence would have twisted disbelief, not of his power to cure disease--which was patent to all--but in his person and authority; that, perhaps, such doubts had already been excited. By first speaking forgiveness, Jesus not only presented the deeper moral aspect of his miracles, but he also established the very claim as regarded his person and authority, which the scribes sought to invalidate. In this forgiveness of sins he presented his person and authority as Divine, and he proved it such by the miracle of healing which immediately followed. Had the two been inverted, there would have been evidence of his power, but not of his Divine Personality, nor of his having authority to forgive sins; and this, not the doing of miracles, was the object of his teaching and mission, of which the miracles were only secondary evidence.

Thus the inward reasoning of the Scribes, which was open to him who reads all thoughts, issued in quite the opposite of what they could have expected. Most unnecessary was the feeling of contempt which we trace in their unspoken words: "Why does He speak like this? He blasphemeth." Yet from their point of view they were right, for God alone can forgive sins; nor has that power ever been given or delegated to man. But was he a mere man, like even the honored of God's servants?

It seemed easy to say: "Your sins have been forgiven." But to him, who had "authority" to do so on earth, it was neither more easy nor more difficult than to say: "Rise, take up your bed, and walk." This latter proved the former, and it gave it in the sight of all men unquestioned reality. So it was the thoughts of the scribes, which, as applied to Christ, were "evil"--since they imputed to him blasphemy--that gave occasion for offering real evidence of what they would have censured and denied.

As the healed man slowly rose, and still silent, rolled up his pallet, a way was made for him between this multitude which followed him with wondering eyes. The amazement of fear fell on them in his presence, and they glorified God, and they said: ["We have never seen anything like this."](#)

* * * * *

5. Read Luke 5:17-26 entirely through one time.
(1) Matthew 9:1-8 (2) Mark 2:1-12
6. Read Luke 5:17-20
(1) No reference
7. Read Luke 5:21
(1) Isaiah 43:25 (2) Luke 7:49
8. Read Luke 5:22
(1) Luke 6:8 (2) Luke 9:47
9. Read Luke 5:23
(1) No reference
10. Read Luke 5:24-25
(1) John 5:8-9, 27
11. Read Luke 5:26
(1) No reference

Luke 5:17-26

- 17 One day as Jesus was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem, and the power of the Lord was with him for healing.
- 18 And some men brought on a stretcher a man who was paralyzed; they were trying to bring him in and set (him) in his presence.
- 19 But not finding a way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on the stretcher through the tiles into the middle in front of Jesus.
- 20 When he saw their faith, he said, "As for you, your sins are forgiven."
- 21 Then the scribes and Pharisees began to ask themselves, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who but God alone can forgive sins?"
- 22 Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them in reply, "What are you thinking in your hearts?"
- 23 Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'?
- 24 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"--he said to the man who was paralyzed, "I say to you, rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home."
- 25 He stood up immediately before them, picked up what he had been lying on, and went home, glorifying God.
- 26 Then astonishment seized them all and they glorified God, and, struck with awe, they said, "We have seen incredible things today."
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Overview from JBC:

Luke has completely rewritten the introduction of this account otherwise taken from Mark. Right at the beginning he groups the full galaxy of Jewish leaders, who in opposing Jesus lose all right to their spiritual heritage.

Verse 17:

the power of the Lord was with him -- The Greek construction implies that Jesus was under a divine impulse to act in favor of the sick. (JBC)

Pharisees were members of a Jewish sect distinguished by its strict adherence to the written law and the supplementary interpretation. The name (or nickname) was derived from a Hebrew word meaning “the separated;” that is, those who avoided ceremonial defilement. They themselves preferred to be called “companions.” Luke’s “teachers of the law” is a paraphrase (for Gentile readers) of Mark’s “scribes”-- professional experts in Jewish legalism. “The Lord” is a reference in this instance to God. Luke appears to think of “the power... to heal” as a sporadic gift. (cf. 6:19) (IB)

Edersheim observed that the Jews distinguished Jerusalem as a separate district in Judea. One must recall that Jesus had already made one tour of Galilee which stirred the Pharisees and rabbis in active opposition. Judea had already been aroused and Jerusalem was the headquarters of the definite campaign now organized against Jesus. One must bear in mind that John 4:1-4 shows that Jesus had already left Jerusalem and Judea because of the jealousy of the Pharisees. They are here on purpose to find fault and to make charges against Jesus. One must not forget that there were many kinds of Pharisees and that not all of them were as bad as these legalistic and meticulous hypocrites who deserved the indictment and exposure of Jesus in Matthew 23:1ff. Paul himself was a specimen of the finer type of Pharisee which, however, developed into the persecuting fanatic until Jesus changed his entire life. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 18-20a:

The “bed” would resemble a stretcher. The narrative has in mind a one-story (and presumably one-room) house. The “crowd” spilling out into the courtyard, prevented access to Jesus through the door. “The roof” would be a flat thatch of straw or branches, coated with clay, and reached by an outside staircase. Luke presupposes non-Palestinian architecture when he speaks of “tiles” that could be lifted. (IB)

Verse 18:

on a stretcher -- The paralytic is carried to Jesus, laying not on “a poor man’s mattress”, but on a “bed” or “small couch.” Luke also calls the paralytic by the word more commonly used in the medical profession. (JBC)

Luke’s phrase is the technical medical term (Hippocrates, Galen) rather than Mark’s vernacular word. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 19:

Luke did not understand too well the Palestinian way of building homes (outside stairway, leading up to a flat roof of clay and straw trodden hard upon wooden rafters); he describes how a man would be let down through the tiled roof of Greco-Roman houses. (JBC)

The flat roof of Jewish houses was usually reached by outside stairway. Cf. Acts 10:9 where Peter went for meditation. Through the tiles--Common and old word for the tile roof. Mark 2:4 speaks of digging a hole in this tile roof. The four friends had

succeeded, probably each holding a rope to a corner of the pallet. It was a moment of triumph over difficulties and surprise to all in the house (Peter's apparently, Mark 2:1). (INT--Robinson)

Verses 20b-24a:

If these verses were once part of a separate narrative, they do not necessarily imply a correlation of sickness and sin, although that was common enough in Judaism. Jesus' exercise of the right of absolution--referred to elsewhere only in 7:47--would serve to support the church's proclamation of forgiveness, a divine prerogative according to the OT and rabbinical tradition. Verse 23 (Mark 2:9) links this bit of early Christian apologetic with the miracle story in which it is embedded, and which demonstrated Jesus' right to say: "Your sins are forgiven you." "The Son of Man" occurs in the Gospels only on the lips of Jesus. Also in the Gospels it is ordinarily an apocalyptic synonym for "Messiah." Whether Jesus himself employed the term, remains a debated question. The hypothesis that it is to be explained as an over literal translation into Greek of an Aramaic phrase meaning nothing more than "man" does not commend itself in this instance. It is clear that both Mark and Luke have Jesus' messianic "authority" in mind. (IB)

Verse 20:

As for you, your sins are forgiven. -- Mark uses a more affectionate form of address, "son." When we expect a physical cure, Jesus forgives sin; Jesus' activity is directed against the kingdom of Satan, and its manifestation in sorrow and death. (JBC)

Verse 21:

Who is this -- Luke again corrects the Greek style of Mark, (accidentally?) putting some of their speech into iambic verse. He has smoothed over the sharp contemptuous words of the adversary: "Why does this (fellow) talk like that? This is blasphemy! Who is able to forgive sins, but the One -- God." (JBC)

Verses 24b-26:

"He said to the man who was paralyzed" is stylistically as awkward in the Greek as in English, and this observation supports the hypothesis that two originally disparate narratives have been fused. According to an almost stereotyped formula, the cure by fiat is verified by the subsequent behavior of the patient and the impression it made on the onlookers. "Amazement" and "awe" were emotions evoked by the successful healer rather than the successful controversialist. (IB)

Verse 24:

This verse bristles with difficulties. There is a disjointed sentence structure. Many scholars claim that Mark had stitched together two separate stories: a miracle story (Mark 2:1-5a, 10b-12 = Luke 5:17-20a, 24b-26) and a conflict story (Mark 2:5b-10a = Luke 5:20b-24a). These same scholars also feel that the term "Son of Man" need not necessarily contain all the overtones of the later days of Jesus' ministry. Moreover, it is not at all impossible that the dispute between Jesus and some leaders would have been entirely overlooked by the crowd in their amazement over a miracle. Ordinarily, a miracle story leads to a climax of awe and wonderment; a conflict story ends in a saying of Jesus that answers a problem or need of the early church. (JBC)

Son of Man -- In using this term, Jesus seems to combine or move between two OT traditions. In one of these, "Son of Man" indicates the lowly condition of mortal flesh (Psalm 8:5; Job 25:6; Ezekiel 2:1; the Dead Sea Scrolls); in another association, that

stemming from Daniel 7:13, "Song of Man" implies the exultation of the lowly, persecuted saints of Israel. Jesus joined the glorious Son of Man, in his eschatological role as judge (Luke 17:22ff.) with that of Suffering Servant. (JBC)

This same parenthesis right in the midst of the words of Jesus is in Mark 2:11; Matthew 9:6, conclusive proof of the interrelation between these two documents. The words of Jesus are quoted practically alike in all three Gospels. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 25:

Luke alone notes that the man, now able to carry the couch upon which he had been forced to lie so long, was glorifying God (7:16; 13:13; 17:15). (JBC)

Verse 26:

Amazement -- Something out of its place, as the mind. Here the people were almost beside themselves as we say with the same idiom. So they kept glorifying God, and at the same time "were filled with fear." Strange things--our very word "paradox", contrary to received opinion. (INT--Robinson)

12. Read Matthew 9:1-8 entirely through one time.
(1) Mark 2:3-12 (2) Luke 5:18-26
13. Read Matthew 9:1
(1) No reference
14. Read Matthew 9:2
(1) Luke 7:48
15. Read Matthew 9:3-5
(1) No reference
16. Read Matthew 9:6
(1) John 5:27
17. Read Matthew 9:7-8
(1) No reference

Matthew 9:1-8

- 1 He entered a boat, made the crossing, and came into his own town.
- 2 And there people brought to him a paralytic lying on a stretcher. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Courage, child, your sins are forgiven."
- 3 At that, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming."
- 4 Jesus knew what they were thinking, and said, "Why do you harbor evil thoughts?
- 5 Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'?
- 6 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" --he then said to the paralytic, "Rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home."
- 7 He rose and went home.
- 8 When the crowds saw this they were struck with awe and glorified God who had given such authority to human beings.

Overview from JBC:

This passage is a controversy-story in which the miracle is the resolution of the controversy. The progress of Matthew's arrangement is obvious: from disease to nature of demonic possession to the power to forgive sins, the climactic exhibition of a power that belongs to God alone (Mark 2:7), a phrase that Matthew strangely omits.

Overview from IB:

Matthew uses this story as an example of the new powers of Christians. In Mark its function is slightly different; it is the first of a series of controversy stories, of which Matthew includes two in verses 10-15. Most form critics assume that the original kernel is a simple story of how Jesus saw the faith of the men and said "Arise, take up your bed..." On this theory the controversy over the forgiveness of sins was added to the tradition, perhaps before Mark received the narrative. Yet one can argue that the controversy part is part of the original story, and that the man was healed of a functional paralysis.

Verse 1:

his own town -- The scene is Capernaum, to which Jesus returns from the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Matthew calls Capernaum "his own city" (9:1), which does not indicate that Jesus had a house there; it was the city to which he returned during the Galilean ministry. Matthew abbreviates Mark even in the dialogue, which is the central part of the story; he omits the presence of the crowds and the almost bizarre detail of the digging of a hole in the roof in order to get the paralytic in the room. (JBC)

"His own city"-- Capernaum (IB)

Verse 2:

their faith -- The appearance of the sick man and his manifest faith elicit not a cure but a declaration of forgiveness of sins, which is not the expected response. Yet it is fully in harmony with the evangelical understanding of miracles. The miracle is worked in response to the faith of the petitioner; and faith in Jesus is already an implicit confession of sin and of repentance. The afflictions of the human condition are the consequences of sin, and forgiveness of sins removes the root of evil. The miracle is far more than a mere wonder; it is at once a symbol and a token of the saving process, which is initiated in Jesus. This conception of miracle escapes the scribes, who see in the words of Jesus an assertion of divine privileges. Jesus does not withdraw from his position but challenges them to an order. (JBC)

The man's "bed" was probably a rug or light pallet. Matthew omits the digging through the mud roof, which shows the Palestinian origin of the story. "Your sins are forgiven;" that is, by God. Jewish speakers often use the impersonal passive form to avoid pronouncing the divine name. (IB)

Verse 3:

Since sickness was due to sin, healing was made possible by repentance and forgiveness. Jesus does not insist on an expression of repentance, and the "scribes" may have thought that he did not regard sin seriously enough. Yet the blasphemy is not this: it is rather that Jesus presumes to pronounce the forgiveness of sins. The scribes of course believed that God was gracious and unfailingly forgave the repentant; but it was presumptuous for a human being to announce that this had actually taken place in any concrete instance. No rabbi would utter such a "declaration of absolution," and not even

Messiah had this privilege. Jesus could not be charged with blasphemy in the strict rabbinical sense, which is cursing God in the name of God. The word is apparently used more loosely here. (IB)

Verse 5:

[Which is easier](#) -- To say that sins are forgiven, which cannot be tested by observation, or to bid the sick man rise and walk. The effect of the healing power shows that the power that saves from sin is present and active. Unless sin is cured, there is no genuine remedy for human ills. This is the point of Matthew's version of the concluding verse; it is the fullness of saving power--not the mere power of performing miracles--that causes men to glorify God. (JBC)

The argument is that if Jesus can free the man from his ailments, God must have forgiven him; therefore Jesus is justified in declaring the forgiveness. The word "easier" is perhaps used because the scribes would think: "It is an easy thing to say he is forgiven, because no one can really tell." (IB)

Verse 6:

Mark (and perhaps Matthew) understood "Son of Man" to mean the Messiah. If this is an exact quotation of Jesus' words, he may have meant that humans have the right to make this declaration. Certainly Matthew believes that, through this incident and saying, Jesus reveals that the Christian congregation now has this power (verse 8). The right to forgive or to withhold forgiveness was claimed by Paul (I Corinthians 5:5; II Corinthians 2:10) and the church for which John wrote (John 20:23). Many Roman Catholic and Protestant service books contain forms of absolution; this is not characteristic of Jewish worship. (IB)

Concerning forgiveness from LToJC:

There are chiefly two fundamental differences between Christianity and all other religious systems, notably Rabbinism. In these two things lies the main characteristic of Christ's work; the fundamental idea of all religions. Subjectively, they concern sin and the sinner; or to put it objectively, the forgiveness of sin and the welcome to the sinner. Rabbinism, and other systems down to modern humanitarianism can only point generally to God for the forgiveness of sin. What here is merely an abstraction, has become a concrete reality in Christ. He speaks forgiveness on earth, because he is its embodiment. As regards the sinner, all other systems know of no welcome to him until, by some means (inward or outward), he has ceased to be a sinner and become a penitent instead. The one demands, the other imparts life. So Christ is the physician, whom they that are in health do not need, but they that are sick are needy. So Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners--not to repentance, as our common text erroneously puts it in Matthew 9:13 and Mark 2:17, but to himself, to the Kingdom; and this is the beginning of repentance.

When his teaching becomes distinctive from Judaism, Jesus puts these two points in the foreground: one at the cure of the paralytic, the other in the call of Levi-Matthew [which we will be studying next]. It was fitting that at the very outset, when Rabbinism followed and challenged Jesus with hostile intent, these two spiritual facts should be brought out, and that, not in a controversial but in a positive and practical manner. As these two questions of sin and of the possible relation of the sinner to God are the great burden of the soul in its upward striving after God, so the answer to them forms the

substance of all religions. All the heavy observances of Rabbinism--its whole law--were only an attempted answer to the question: How can a man be just with God?

As Rabbinism stood self-confessedly silent and powerless as regarded the forgiveness of sins, so it had emphatically no word of welcome or help for the sinner. The very term "Pharisee" or "separated one," implies the exclusion of sinners. The contempt and avoidance of the unlearned, which was so characteristic of the system, arose not from mere pride of knowledge, but from the thought that, as "the Law" was the glory and privilege of Israel--ignorance of it was blameworthy. Thus, the unlearned blasphemed his Creator, and missed or perverted his own destiny. It was a principle, that "the ignorant cannot be pious." On the principles of Rabbinism, there was logic in all this, and reason also, though sadly perverted. The yoke of "the kingdom of God" was the high destiny of every true Israelite. Only to them it lay in external, not internal conformity to the Law of God: "in meat and drink" not "in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. It is true that they also perceived, that "sins of thought" and purpose, though uncommitted, were "more grievous than even sins of outward deed; but only in this sense, that each outward sin was traceable to inward dereliction or denial of the Law--"no man sins, unless the spirit of error has first entered into him." On this ground the punishment of infidelity or apostasy in the next world was endless, while that of actual transgression was limited in duration.

As "righteousness came by the Law", so also was return to it on the part of the sinner. Although Rabbinism had no welcome to the sinner, it was unceasing in its call to repentance and in extolling its merits. All the prophets had prophesied only of repentance. It not only averted punishment and prolonged life, but it brought good, even the final redemption to Israel and the world at large. It surpassed the observance of all the commandments, and was as meritorious as if one had restored the temple and altar, and offered all sacrifices. One hour of penitence and good works outweighed the whole world to come. These are only a few of the extravagant statements by which Rabbinism extolled repentance. But, when more closely examined, we find that this repentance, as preceding the free welcome of invitation to the sinner, was only another form of work-righteousness.

At the very outset there was absolute dissimilarity at the very foundation of religious life between Jesus and his contemporaries. Where, if not from heaven, came a doctrine so novel as that which Jesus made the basis of his Kingdom?

In the OT repentance was "a return"; while in the NT, it is "a change of mind." The full meaning of repentance, or "a return" in the OT is only realized, when a man has returned from dereliction to observance of the Law.

Rabbinism knew nothing of a forgiveness of sin, free and unconditional, unless in the case of those who had not the power of doing anything for their atonement. The nature of repentance has yet to be more fully explained. Its gate is sorrow and shame. In that sense repentance may be the work of a moment, "as in the twinkling of an eye" and a life's sins may obtain mercy by the tears and prayers of a few minutes' repentance. Our word contrition in Jewish theology was "confession." And confession was regarded only as repentance in the sense of being its preparation or beginning in a "return to God." Even if it changed into unintentional sin, or arrested judgment, it would still leave a man without those works which are not only his real destiny and merit heaven, but constitute

true repentance. For, as sin is ultimately dereliction of the Law, beginning within, so repentance is ultimately return to the Law.

Inward repentance only arrested the decrees of justice. That which really put the penitent into right relationship with God was good deeds, such as fasting.. Fasting was meritorious in a threefold sense: (1) it was the expression of humiliation, (2) it was viewed an offering to God, similar to, but better than the fat of sacrifices on the altar, and (3) it was viewed as preventing further sins by chastening and keeping under the body. Also considered under good deeds was self-inflicted penances, restitution to those who had been wronged, public acknowledgment of public sins, avoidance of sinning in the same direction as formerly one had done, and overcoming sin in temptation. Beyond all this were the really good works, whether in occupation with the Law, or outward deeds, which constituted perfect repentance. So far was the doctrine of external merit carried, that to be buried in the land of Israel was supposed to ensure forgiveness of sins.

Although Rabbinic teaching about the need of repentance runs close to that of the Bible, the vital difference between Rabbinism and the Gospel lies in this: whereas Jesus freely invited all sinners, whatever their past, assuring them welcome and grace, the last word of Rabbinism is only despair, and a kind of pessimism. For it is expressly and repeatedly declared in the case of certain sins, and characteristically of heresy, that even if a man genuinely and truly repented, he must expect immediately to die. His death would be the evidence that his repentance was genuine, since, though such a sinner might turn from his evil, it would be impossible for him, if he lived, to hold on to the good, and to do it.

It is in the light of what we have just learned concerning the Rabbinic views of forgiveness and repentance that the call of Levi-Matthew must be read, if we are to perceive its full meaning.

Session 7

g. CALLING OF LEVI (MATTHEW)

Matthew 9:9-13

Mark 2:13-17

Luke 5:27-32

18. Read Matthew 9:9-13 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference
19. Read Matthew 9:9
(1) No reference
20. Read Matthew 9:10
(1) Matthew 11:19 (2) Luke 15:1-2
21. Read Mathew 9:11-12
(1) No reference
22. Read Matthew 9:13
(1) Hosea 6:6 (2) Matthew 12:7

Matthew 9:9-13

- 9 As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the customs post. He said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.
- 10 While he was at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat with Jesus and his disciples.
- 11 The Pharisees saw this and said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"
- 12 He heard this and said, "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do.
- 13 Go and learn the meaning of the words, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' I did not come to call the righteous but sinners."

Overview from JBC:

This is a "controversy-story" that ends in a saying; the vocation of Matthew is the occasion of the controversy. The tax collector is named Levi in Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27, 29 and only in these passages; the name Matthew appears here and in all the list of the Twelve. The tax collectors are known in the Gospels as a atypical class of moral reprobates, sometimes paired with sinners (as in 9:10-11). The Roman taxes were collected by tax farmers, who bid for the right to collect taxes and then extorted them to the limit. They were therefore not only considered oppressors; they were traitors to their own people because they collaborated with the foreign imperial power.

If Matthew is the author of this Gospel, then this passage would be

autobiographical. In this hypothesis, it is strange that this passage shows exactly the same kind of dependence on Mark and the same type of revision found elsewhere. The revisions are actually slight, consisting of a few omissions and the addition of 9:13. Matthew follows the call with the same immediacy that is seen in the call of the fishermen (4:18-22); the promptness of Matthew's response is more remarkable because he is such an unlikely subject.

Overview from IB:

This is another "controversy story" or "paradigm", the point of which is contained in the saying of verse 12.

Verse 9:

The tax-office or custom-house of Capernaum placed here to collect taxes from the boats going across the lake outside of Herod's territory or from people going from Damascus to the coast, a regular caravan route. Called "Matthew" in Mark 10:3, Matthew the publican is named as one of the twelve apostles. Mark (2:14) and Luke (5:27) call this man Levi. He had two names as was common, Matthew Levi. The publicans get their name in English from the Latin word "publicanus" (a man who did public duty), not a very accurate designation. They were detested because they practiced graft. Already Jesus had spoken of the publican (Luke 5:46) in a way that shows the public disfavor in which they were held. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 10:

His second response is a gesture of hospitality; he invites Jesus to a farewell dinner with his friends, "tax collectors and sinners." The "sinners" are nonobservant Jews. (JBC)

"Sat at table"; literally, "reclined," for this was the Greco-Roman custom, followed also at formal Jewish banquets; but it is not necessary to suppose that this was always true of Jewish meals, especially in Galilee. Mary says "in his house", presumably Jesus' home in Capernaum. This fits with "I came not to call" or "invite" in verse 13. "Many tax collectors and sinners": Cf. on 5:46. The "sinners" may include those who were careless about the minutiae of the law and also those guilty of serious moral lapses. (IB)

Publicans and sinners. Often coupled together in common scorn and in contrast with the righteous (Luke 9:13). It was a strange motley at Levi's feast ((1) Jesus and the four fisher disciples, Nathanael and Philip; (2) Matthew Levi and his former companions, publicans and sinners; (3) Pharisees with their scribes or students as on-lookers; (4) and the disciples of John the Baptist who were fasting at the very time that Jesus was feasting and with such a group). The Pharisees criticize sharply "their teacher" for such a social breach of "reclining" together with publicans at Levi's feast. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 11:

Why does your teacher eat ... -- Pharisaic Judaism held strictly to the principle of avoiding contact with Gentiles and Jews who did not observe the Law; these were social outcasts of the community, and no rabbi could afford to consort with such. The remark may express surprise as much as hostility; but the snobbish attitude that underlies the remark elicits a sharp response from Jesus. (JBC)

The Mishnah taught the duty of hospitality: "Let your house be wide open and let the poor be members of your household;" but the rabbis had in mind hospitality to the

pious poor, and taught, "Keep far from an evil neighbor and do not associate with the wicked." At one time Peter adhered to the Pharisaic principle of exclusiveness and separated himself from the Gentiles (Galatians 2:11-12); on another occasion he laid himself open to criticism by eating with them (Acts 11:3) (IB)

Verse 12:

do not need a physician -- Jesus' saying is cast in a proverbial form, and in Matthew it is strengthened by the quotation of Hosea 6:6 (LXX). The quotation places human relations above cultic worship, and of course above mere observance of an external manner of life. The quotation and saying express the compassion of Jesus for sinners, to whom his mission is directed, but it also strikes at the self-righteousness of the Pharisees. Those who do not recognize their illness will not summon the physician nor receive him; they are beyond healing. No one can approach Jesus unless he confesses that he is a sinner. The position of this story after the story of the healing of the paralytic is extremely apt in the Gospels. The faith that heals demands repentance. (JBC)

A scholar points out that the rabbis would not have criticized Jesus merely because he cared for the outcast, the poor, and the sinner. "They too welcomed the *repentant* sinner." What is new is that Jesus *sought* out the sinner. "To deny the greatness and originality of Jesus in this connection, to deny that he opened a new chapter in men's attitude toward sin and sinners, is, I think, to beat the head against the wall." This principle of Jesus is set forth in 18:12-14; Luke 15:3-6, 8-9. (IB)

Verse 13:

The quotation from Hosea 6:6 does not fit well here, although it expresses a principle which Jesus followed. The remainder of the verse, together with verse 12b, probably constitutes a poetic couplet. Jesus no doubt calls his hearers to the kingdom of God, as the householder does in the parable of the great banquet (Luke 14:21). "To repentance" is not found in most of the best manuscripts. (IB)

"Go and learn." With biting sarcasm Jesus bids these preachers to learn the meaning of Hosea 6:6. It is repeated in Matthew 12:7. (INT--Robinson)

Summary from LToJC:

It is in the light of what we have learned concerning the Rabbinic views of forgiveness and repentance that the call of Levi-Matthew must be read, if we would perceive its full meaning. There is no need to suppose that it took place immediately on the cure of the paralytic. On the contrary, the more circumstantial account of Mark implies, that some time had intervened. If our suggestion is correct, that it was winter when the paralytic was healed at Capernaum, we may suppose it to have been the early spring-time of that favored district, when Jesus "went forth again by the seaside." And with this, as we shall see, best agrees with the succession of the events that follow the calling of Levi-Matthew.

Few, if any, could have enjoyed better opportunities of hearing, and quietly thinking over the teaching of the Prophet of Nazareth, than Levi-Matthew. In Galilee it was common to have two names--one the strictly Jewish, the other the Galilean. In the sequel, the first or purely Jewish name of Levi was dropped, and only that of Matthew retained.

Sitting before his custom-house, as on that day when Jesus called him, Matthew must have frequently heard him as he taught by the sea-shore. For this would be the best,

and therefore often chosen, place for that purpose. From here not only the multitude from Capernaum could easily follow; but there was the landing-place for the many boats which traversed the Lake, or coasted from town to town. And this not only for them who had business in Capernaum or that neighborhood, but also for those who would then strike the great road of Eastern commerce, which led from Damascus to the harbors of the West. Touching the Lake in that very neighborhood, it turned northward and westward to join what was termed the upper Galilean road.

We know much, and yet, as regards details, perhaps too little about those “tolls, dues, and customs, which made the Roman administration such sore and vexatious exaction to all “Provincials,” and which in Judea loaded the very name of publican with contempt and hatred. They who cherished the gravest religious doubts as to the lawfulness of paying any tribute to Caesar (since it involved recognition of a bondage to which they would have closed their eyes if they could, the substitution of a heathen kingship for that of Yahweh) must have looked on the publican as the very embodiment of anti-nationalism. But men do not always act under constant consciousness of such abstract principles. Yet the endless annoying interferences, the unjust and cruel demands, the petty tyranny, and the extortionate greed, from which there was neither defense nor appeal, would make it always almost unbearable. It is to this that the Rabbis so often refer. If “publicans” were disqualified from being judges or witnesses it was, at least as regarded witness-bearing because “they exacted more than was due.” Hence also it was said that repentance was especially difficult for tax-gatherers and custom-house officers.

It is of importance to notice that the Talmud distinguishes two classes of publicans: the tax-gatherer in general, and the custom-house official. Although both classes fall under Rabbinic ban, the custom-house official--as Matthew was--is the chief one detested. Because their tariffs were more annoying, and gave more scope to deceptions. The tax-gatherer collected the regular dues, which consisted of ground-, income-, and poll-taxes. The ground-tax amounted to 1/10 of all grain and 1/5 of the wine and fruit grown which was partly paid in kind, and partly commuted into money. The income-tax amounted to 1 %; while the head-money, or poll-tax, was levied on all persons, bond and free: in the case of men from the age of 14, in that of women from the age of 12, up to that of 65.

If this offered many opportunities for annoying tariffs and greedy injustice, the custom-house officials might inflict greater hardship upon the poor people. There was tax and duty upon all imports and exports; on all that was bought and all that was sold; bridge-money; road-money; harbor dues; town-dues; and on and on. Their ingenuity could invent a tax, and find a name for every kind of tariff, such as on axles, wheels, pack-animals, pedestrians, roads, highways; on admission to markets; on carriers, bridges, boats, and quays; on crossing rivers, on dams, on licenses, in short, on such a variety of objects, that even the research of modern scholars has not been able to identify them all. On good the duty tax amounted to from 2 ½ to 5% of its value, and on articles of luxury 12 ½ %. But even this was as nothing, compared to the aggravation of being constantly stopped on the journey, having to unload all one's pack-animals, when every bale and package was opened, and the contents tumbled about, private letters opened, and the custom-house official ruled supreme in his insolence and greedy.

The very word custom-house official was associated with the idea of oppression

and injustice. He was literally, as really, an oppressor. The Talmud charges them with gross partiality, remitting in the case of those to whom they wished to show favor, and over-charging those who were not their favorites. They were a criminal race, to which Leviticus 20:5 applied. It has been told that a certain custom-house official took from a defenseless person his ass and gave him another very inferior animal for it. Against such unscrupulous oppressors every kind of deception was allowed; goods might be declared to be votive offerings, or a person pass his slave off as his son.

The custom-house officials were called “great” if they employed substitutes, and “small” if they stood alone at the receipt of custom. Until the time of Caesar, the taxes were farmed in Rome to the highest bidder (mostly by a joint-stock company of the knightly order) which employed publicans under them. But by a decree of Caesar, the taxes of Judea were no longer farmed, but instead levied by publicans in Judea, and paid directly to the government, the officials being appointed by the provincials themselves. In other words, the “publicans” were not subordinates, but instead they were direct officials of the government. This was a great alleviation of burden, although it made the tax-gatherers only more unpopular, as being the direct officials of the heathen power.

What has been described will cast a peculiar light on the call by Jesus of sinners, in his call of Matthew. Levi-Matthew was not only a “publican”, but of the worst kind. He was a little custom-house official who himself stood alone at his custom-house; one of the class of whom repentance offered special difficulties. Of such officials, those who had to take toll from boats were perhaps the worst, if we are to judge by the proverb: “Woe to the ship which sails without having paid the dues.” Matthew, however, might have been only one of that numerous class to whom religion is merely a matter quite outside of, and in another region from life, and who, having first gone astray through ignorance, feel themselves even further repelled, or rather shut out, by the narrow, harsh, uncharitable ness of those whom they look upon as the religious and pious.

Now quite another day has dawned on him. The Prophet of Nazareth was not like those other great Rabbis, or their pietist, self-righteous imitators. There was something about him which not only aroused the conscience, but drew the heart--compelling, not repelling. What he said opened a new world. His very appearance spoke of him as not being harsh, self-righteous, and far away, but it spoke instead of the Helper, if even the friend, of sinners. There was not between him and one like Matthew, the great, almost impassable gap of repentance. He had seen and heard him in the synagogue. Those who had heard his words, or witnessed his power, could never forget, or lose the impression he made on them. The people, the rulers, even the evil spirits had owned his authority. In the synagogue Jesus was still the Great One, far-away from him; and he, Levi-Matthew, the little custom-house official of Capernaum, to whom, as the Rabbis told him, repentance was next to impossible. But out there, in the open, by the seashore, it was otherwise. Unobserved by others, he observed all, and could yield himself, without reserve, to the impression. Now, it was an eager multitude that came from Capernaum; then, a long train bearing sufferers, to whom gracious, full, immediate relief was granted --whether they were Rabbinic saints, or sinners. And still more gracious than his deeds were his words.

So Matthew sat before his custom-house, and listened and hoped. Those white-sailed boats would bring crowds of listeners; the busy caravan on that highway would

stop, and its travelers turn aside to join the eager multitude--to hear the word and see the word. Surely, it was not a time for buying and selling, and Levi would have little work, and less heart for it at his custom-house. Perhaps he may have witnessed the call of those first four disciples; at the very least, he must have known the fishermen and boat owners of Capernaum. Now it appeared as if Jesus had been brought still nearer to Matthew. For, the great ones of Israel, the Scribes and Pharisees, and their pietist followers, had combined against Jesus, and would exclude Him, not on account of sin, but on account of the sinners. We might imagine that long before that eventful day which for ever decided his life, Matthew had, in his heart, already become the disciple of Jesus. Only he dared not, could not, have hoped for personal recognition--far less for a call to discipleship. But when it came, and Jesus fixed on him that look of love which searched the inmost depth of the soul, and made Him the true Fisher of men, it needed not a moment's thought or consideration. When he spoke, "Follow me," the past seemed all swallowed up in the present heaven of bliss. He said not a word, for his soul was in the speechless surprise of unexpected love and grace; but he rose up, left the custom-house, and followed him. Much was gained that day, not of Matthew alone, but of all the poor and needy in Israel--of all sinners from among mankind, to whom the door of heaven was opened.

It could not have been very long after this, maybe immediately, that the memorable gathering took place in the house of Matthew, which gave occasion to that quibbling of the Pharisaic Scribes, which served further to bring out the meaning of Levi's call. Opposition always brings into clearer light the positive truth, just as judgment never comes alone, but is always combined with a display of higher mercy. It was natural that all the publicans around should, after the call of Matthew, have come to his house to meet Jesus. Even from the lowest point of view, the event would give them a new standing in the Jewish world, in relation to the Prophet of Nazareth. It was characteristic of Jesus that he should improve such an opportunity. When we read of "sinners" as in company with these publicans, it is not necessary to think of gross or open offenders, although such may have been included. We know what such a term may have included in the Pharisaic vocabulary. Equally characteristic was it, that the Rabbinites should have addressed their objection as to the fellowship with such, not to the Master, but to the disciples. Perhaps, it was not only, nor chiefly, from moral cowardice, although they must have known what the reply of Jesus would have been. On the other hand, there was wisdom, or rather cunning, in putting it to the disciples. As yet they were only initial learners, and the question was one not so much of principle, as of acknowledged Jewish propriety. Had they been able to lodge this quibbling in their minds, it would have fatally shaken the confidence of the disciples in the Master. If they could have been turned aside, the cause of Jesus would have been grievously injured, if not destroyed. It was with the same object, that they shortly afterwards enlisted the aid of the well-meaning, but only partially instructed disciples of John the Baptist on the question of fasting, which presented a still stronger consensus of Jewish opinion against Jesus, all the more telling, that here the practice of John seemed to clash with that of Jesus.

But then John was at that time in prison, and passing through the temporary darkness of a thick cloud towards a fuller light. But Jesus could not leave His disciples to

answer for themselves. What could they or would they have had to say? And he always speaks for us, when we cannot answer for ourselves. From their own standpoint and contention--also in their own form of speech--He answered the Pharisees. He not only silenced their attempts of gaining righteousness, but he further opened up the meaning of His actions--His very purpose and mission. "No need have they who are strong and in health of physician, but they who are ill." It was the very principle of Pharisaism which he set forth, regarding their self-exclusion from Him and His consorting with the diseased. As the more Hebraic Matthew adds, applying the exact Rabbinic formula, so often used when superficial flawed knowledge is directed to further thought and information: "Go, and learn!" Learn what? What their own Scriptures meant, what was implied in the further prophetic teaching, as correction of a one-sided literalism and externalism that misinterpreted the doctrine of sacrifices--learn that fundamental principle of the spiritual meaning of the Law, as explanatory of its mere letter: "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." They knew no mercy that was not sacrifice, and with merit attaching to it. Jesus knew of no sacrifice that was real and acceptable to God other than mercy. If it did not contain mercy, than it was not a true sacrifice. This is also a fundamental principle of the OT, as spiritually understood. Being such a fundamental principle, He afterwards again applied this saying to the prophet to his own way of viewing and treating the Sabbath-question.

Jesus opened anew the OT, of which their key of knowledge had only locked the door. There was yet another and higher, which explained and applied this saying and the whole OT, and thus His own mission. For this was the fullest unfolding and highest vindication of it: "For, I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners." This saying of Jesus concerning the purpose of His Incarnation and work: "to call not the righteous, but sinners" also marks the standpoint of Jesus, and the relation which each of us, according to our own view of self, of righteousness, and of sin (personally, voluntarily, and deliberately) occupies towards the Kingdom and Christ.

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23. Read Mark 2:13-17 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference
24. Read Mark 2:13
(1) Mark 4:1
25. Read Mark 2:14-17
(1) Matthew 9:9-13 (2) Luke 5:27-32

Mark 2:13-17

- 13 Once again he went out along the sea. All the crowd came to him and he taught them.
- 14 As he passed by, he saw Levi, son of Alphaeus, sitting at the customs post. He said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.
- 15 While he was at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners sat with Jesus

- and his disciples; for there were many who followed him.
- 16 Some scribes who were Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors and said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"
- 17 Jesus heard this and said to them (that), "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners."

Verse 13:

[along the sea](#) -- or "by the seaside." A pretty picture of Jesus walking by the sea and a walk that Jesus loved (Mark 1:16; Matthew 4:18). Probably Jesus went out from the crowd in Peter's house as soon as he could. It was a joy to get a whiff of fresh air by the sea. But it was not long until all the crowd began to come to Jesus, and Jesus was teaching them. It was the old story over again, but Jesus did not run away. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 14:

[Levi the son of Alphaeus](#) -- Mark does not suggest, as does Matthew 9:19; 10:3, that Levi was the apostle Matthew. (JBC)

A strong group of manuscripts read "James" instead of Levi, who is otherwise unknown. Matthew changes to read "Matthew." It is improbable that "James" and Levi were two names for the same man. Levi was either a collector of import and export duties on the highway that ran through Capernaum, or a tax officer of Herod Antipas. (IB)

[As he passed by](#) -- Jesus was constantly on the alert for opportunities to do good. An unlikely specimen was Levi (Matthew), son of Alphaeus, sitting at the toll-gate on the Great West Road from Damascus to the Mediterranean. He was a publican who collected toll for Herod Antipas. The Jews hated or despised these publicans and classed them with sinners. The challenge of Jesus was sudden and sharp, but Levi (Matthew) was ready to respond at once. He had heard of Jesus and quickly decided. Great decisions are often made on a moment's notice. Levi is a fine object lesson for business men who put off service to Christ to carry on their businesses. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 15:

[at table in his house](#) -- Before this pronouncement story came to be joined to the call of Levi, it probably meant that Jesus was in his own house. In this context, however, it appears to be Levi's house, thus reinforcing the point that Jesus associated with tax-collectors and sinners to the extent of table-fellowship with them. (JBC)

"In his house" presumably means Jesus' own house. This is certainly true if verses 13-14 and 15-17 were originally independent. The "tax collectors" are local, not the great magnates who farmed the taxes of whole provinces, the "publicani" of Rome, but the underlings who administered this onerous and wasteful system. The collection of taxes went to the highest bidder, who made his profit by exacting from the people as much more as possible over and above what he had paid for the privilege, a system common in the ancient world. "Sinners" were those who disregarded the requirements of the Mosaic Law; the association of the two groups may have been natural, since both were despised by strict and legal Jews. Publicans were also despised by others. It was a scandal to observant Jews in Jesus' own time that he associated with such men, and it was a charge against the Christians later, both that their Master had done so and that his

followers still welcomed sinners. “There were many”-- that is, disciples-- has been added, since the story as a whole seems to assume the twelve as present with Jesus, although Mark has related the call of only five. (IB)

Verse 16:

“Scribes and Pharisees” is a frequent combination, like “publicans and sinners,” but the original text here probably read “scribes of the Pharisees”; that is, scribes who belonged to the Pharisaic party. Not all scribes belonged to the Pharisaic party. These were presumably more strict and rigorous than other scribes in their observance of food regulations and other requirements for which Pharisaism stood. Notice that the objection is addressed to the “disciples,” as to the later followers of Jesus. A strict observant of traditional Judaism would avoid all contact with lax and careless Jews, lest he himself should become contaminated. (IB)

[scribes who were Pharisees](#) -- The correct text reads: the scribes of the Pharisees. Cf. “their scribes” in Luke 5:30. Matthew gave a great reception (Luke 5:29) in his house (Mark 2:15). These publicans and sinners not only accepted Levi’s invitation, but they imitated his example “and were following Jesus”. It was an motley crew from the standpoint of these young theologians, the scribes of the Pharisees, who were on hand, being invited to pick flaws if they could. It was probably in the long hall of the house where the scribes stood and ridiculed Jesus and the disciples, unless they stood outside, feeling too pious to go into the house of a publican. It was an offense for a Jew to eat with Gentiles as even many of the early Jewish Christians felt (Acts 11:3) and publicans and sinners were regarded like Gentiles (I Corinthians 5:11). (INT--Robinson)

Verse 17:

[do not need a physician](#) -- The point of the story lies in Jesus’ proverbial pronouncement, which Mark understands less as a new principle of moral behavior than as an epiphany of Jesus’ Messianic power to forgive sins. He invites sinners to the Messianic banquet rather than letting himself be contaminated by their presence. (JBC)

[I did not come to call the righteous but sinners](#) -- A Christian interpretation of Jesus’ proverb in 2:17a. It is not that those who were upright according to Mosaic Law lay outside the scope of Jesus’ invitation, but that in fact those Jews who did accept Christ, were, by and large, not from among the scribes and Pharisees, but from among those considered by them as sinners. (JBC)

Jesus’ reply is complete; he does not excuse his conduct, but points out that this lay directly in line with his mission -- a “physician” can scarcely do anything for the sick if he avoids contact with them. Here is the beginning of the profound Christian metaphor, Christ, the Great Physician. “I came” reflects Jesus’ sense of mission. Some scholars have suggested that this, like other “I” sayings, has been added as an explanation in the course of the handing on of the tradition. But it is not impossible as a statement of Jesus’ own view; it does not reflect any particular “christological” theory of the later church. “To repentance” is not in the best manuscripts, and probably represents later homiletically interpretation: Jesus’ mission was to call sinners to repentance in preparation for the kingdom of God (1:15). (IB)

[the righteous](#) -- Jesus for the sake of argument accepts the claim of the Pharisees to be righteous, although, as a matter of fact, they fell far short of it. Elsewhere (Matthew 23:1ff.) Jesus shows that the Pharisees were extortionate and devoured widows’ houses

and wore a cloak of pride and hypocritical respectability. The words “unto repentance” are not genuine in Mark, but are in Luke 5:32. Jesus called men to new spiritual life and away from sin and so to repentance. But this claim stopped their mouths against what Jesus was doing. The well or the strong are not those who need the physician in an epidemic. (INT--Robinson)

The introduction of the words “to repentance” in some manuscripts of Matthew and Mark shows, how early the full meaning of Christ’s words was misinterpreted by prosaic apologetic attempts, that failed to fathom their depth. For, Christ called sinners to better and higher than repentance, even to Himself and His Kingdom; and to “emendate” the original record by introducing these words from another Gospel marks a purpose, indicative of retrogression. (LToJC)

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26. Read Luke 5:27-32 entirely through one time.
(1) Matthew 9:9-13 (2) Mark 2:13-17
27. Read Luke 5:27-28
(1) No reference
28. Read Luke 5:29-30
(1) Luke 15:1-2
29. Read Luke 5:31-32
(1) No reference

Luke 5:27-32

- 27 After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the customs post. He said to him, "Follow me."
- 28 And leaving everything behind, he got up and followed him.
- 29 Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were at table with them.
- 30 The Pharisees and their scribes complained to his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"
- 31 Jesus said to them in reply, "Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do.
- 32 I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners."

Verse 27:

Luke omits Mark’s reference to the Sea of Galilee and to the crowd. At once Jesus turns away from everything else and peers intently at Levi, detecting noble hopes and genuine regret. (JBC)

Levi -- Usually considered to be the same as the apostle Matthew (Matthew 9:9; 10:13); but the name Levi is never included in any list of the Twelve. (JBC)

A publican -- This was a lessee of the right to collect a Roman tax, and “tax collector” is a better translation into English of the Greek name for a mere henchman. “Levi” is identified in Mark as a “son of Alphaeus.” A certain James “the son of Alphaeus” is included in all Synoptic Gospel lists of the twelve disciples (Mark 3:18), but there is no suggestion in either Mark or Luke that “Levi” became a member of that inner circle. The author of the Gospel of Matthew had apparently confused “Levi” with Matthew, substituting the latter name in Matthew 9:9 and describing him in Matthew 10:3 as a “tax collector.” The “tax office” need not have been more than a roadside table. (IB)

“A publican named Levi”--Mark 2:13 has also “the son of Alphaeus” while Matthew 9:9 calls him “Matthew.” He had, of course, both names. All three use the same words for the place of toll. All three Gospels give the command of Jesus: “Follow me.” (INT--Robinson)

Verse 28:

Luke alone states that Levi “left everything” behind to follow Jesus. This addition, along with the word “rising,” indicates the continual and ready disposition of discipleship. (JBC)

“He forsook all”--this detail is in Luke alone. He left his profitable business for the service of Christ. “Followed him”--he began at once to follow him and he kept it up. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 29-32:

It is an open question whether Mark thought of Jesus as the host or the guest at the “great feast,” but Luke leaves no room for difference of opinion (cf. 19:5). “Sitting at table” is a modernization of the Greek word for “reclining.” The presence of “the Pharisees and their scribes” at such a meal appears to be an incompatible element in the narrative, and many interpreters believe that the statement that they “murmured against his disciples” probably reflects a situation in which Judaism was charging the church with admitting riffraff to its membership. Nevertheless Jesus’ association with men and women outside the pale of Jewish legalism is well fixed in the gospel tradition, and it would be hazardous to assume that the whole story has been derived from the saying in verse 32. Sharing a meal with those who did not observe the Law was included by the rabbis among the “things that shame a pupil of the scribes”. Luke’s addition of “to repentance” narrows the reference in verse 32, which may originally implied “to the Kingdom.” (IB)

Verse 29:

The income Levi renounced must have been large, if he was able to spread a banquet for the many invited guests. (JBC)

“A great feast”--here and in Luke 14:13 is the only place this phrase occurs in the NT. The word means reception. Levi made Jesus a big reception. “Publicans and others”--Luke declines here to use “sinners” like Mark 2:15 and Matthew 9:10 although he does so in verse 30. None but social outcasts would eat with publicans at such a feast or barbecue, for it was a very large affair. “were sitting at meat with them”-- Literally, they were reclining with them (Jesus and the disciples). It was a motley crew that Levi had brought together, but he showed courage as well as loyalty to Jesus. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 30:

the Pharisees and their scribes -- They heard that Jesus did something worse than inviting unclean persons to his own home; he went to their homes, where one could never be sure that the dietary laws were being observed. (JBC)

“The Pharisees and their scribes” -- not “scribes and Pharisees” but “the Pharisees and the scribes of them” (the Pharisees). Some manuscripts omit “their,” but Mark 2:16 (the scribes of the Pharisees) shows that it is correct here. Some of the scribes were Sadducees. It is only the Pharisees who find fault here. “Murmured.”-- This is a picturesque word in the original Greek that sounds like its meaning. A late word used of the cooing of doves. It is like the buzzing of bees. They were not invited to this feast and would not have come if they had been. But, not being invited, they hang on the outside and criticize the disciples of Jesus for being there. The crowd was so large that the feast may have been served out in the open court at Levi’s house, a sort of reclining garden party. “The publicans and sinners”--Here Luke is quoting the criticism of the critics.. Notice how one article “the” makes one group of them all. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 32:

not come to call the righteous -- Thus Jesus refers ironically to the self-righteous. (JBC)

to repentance -- Luke’s addition gives a more religious and conventional form to the saying. While sinners invite Jesus to be their guest at a dinner, Jesus invites them--by repentance--to become his guests at the eschatological banquet. Jesus, by his presence, transforms the banquet into his own. (JBC)

“to repentance” -- This is Luke’s own addition, it is found only in Luke; and it is not genuine in Mark 2:17 or Matthew 9:12. Only sinners would need a call to repentance, a change of mind and life. For the moment Jesus accepts the Pharisaic division between “righteous” and “sinners” to score them and to answer their criticism. At the other times he will show that they only pretend to be “righteous” and are “hypocrites” in reality. But Jesus has here blazed the path for all soul-winners. The self-satisfied are the hard ones to win and they often resent the efforts to win them to Christ. (INT--Robinson)

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h. DISCUSSION OF FASTING

Matthew 9:14-17

Mark 2:18-22

Luke 5:33-39

30. Read Matthew 9:14-17 entirely through one time.
(1) Mark 2:18-22 (2) Luke 5:33-39
31. Read Matthew 9:14-17
(1) No reference

Matthew 9:14-17

- 14 Then the disciples of John approached him and said, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast (much), but your disciples do not fast?"
- 15 Jesus answered them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.
- 16 No one patches an old cloak with a piece of unshrunk cloth, for its fullness pulls away from the cloak and the tear gets worse.
- 17 People do not put new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise the skins burst, the wine spills out, and the skins are ruined. Rather, they pour new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved."

Overview from JBC:

In Matthew the question is asked by the disciples of John; in Mark and Luke the questioners are not identified. Fasting was a recognized Jewish observance that was not practiced by Jesus and his disciples.

Verse 14:

Fasting was obligatory only on the day of Atonement--Yom Kippur--and publicly proclaimed fast days. The reference is to private, voluntary fasting, which was not characteristic of Jesus' followers. (IB)

"The disciples of John." -- One is surprised to find disciples of the Baptist in the role of critics of Christ along with the Pharisees. But John was languishing in prison and they perhaps were blaming Jesus for doing nothing about it. At any rate John would not have gone to Levi's feast on one of the Jewish fast-days. The strict asceticism of the Baptist (Matthew 11:18) and of the Pharisaic rabbis (Luke 18:12) was imitated by their disciples. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 15:

Can the wedding guests mourn -- The question is answered by a saying; possibly the form of the saying is influenced by the fact that fasting was observed in the primitive community. The saying affirms that the sojourn of Jesus with his disciples is considered a time of joy when fasting (or other symbols of grief or mourning) is out of place. Jesus does not reject fasting as such, but asserts the liberty of fasting when it is suitable; he obviously does not regard the Pharisaic customs as obligatory. The comparison of the messianic advent to a wedding festival is found also in 22:1-14; 25:1-13; Revelation 19:7-8; these passages, however, are explicitly eschatological. The joy of the eschatological festival is not limited to the end of time; it begins with the coming of him who is the bridegroom. (JBC)

"Wedding guests" is the proper explanation of the Semitic "sons of the bride-chamber." The "bridegroom" is not necessarily Jesus. He reminds his hearers that no one fasts as long as a marriage feast is going on; at such a time the guests were dispensed from certain religious duties, and even rabbis were expected to forsake the study of the law. But this is not all. Jewish teaching often described the "days of the Messiah" with the figure of a wedding feast; and Jesus and his disciples in their life together already enjoy a foretaste of that messianic bliss. Fasting is not appropriate if the kingdom is being manifested in Jesus' mighty deeds. The second half of this verse, which does

identify Jesus with the bridegroom, belongs to a later stage of the tradition and is used to justify the later Christian custom of fasting. (IB)

“The sons of the bride-chamber” -- It is a late Hebrew idiom for the wedding guests, “the friends of the bridegroom and all the sons of the bride-chamber.” Cf. John 2:9. (INT-- Robinson)

Overview of verses 16 and 17 from IB:

These sayings were not originally connected with those of verse 15, but they fit better with the first half of that verse than with the second. Their interpretation depends entirely on their application; by themselves they teach only the danger of the new. If you want to preserve “old wineskins” do not put “new wine” in! Jess may have used these proverbs to convey that his teaching could not and need not be reconciled with that of the conservatives, or that the dawning kingdom of God bursts the framework of the old order (11:12-13 = Luke 16:16). The metaphors of wine and the new mantle are often used to refer to the new world which God will create (Hebrews 1:10-12; Acts 10:11; 11:5).

Verse 16:

“Undressed cloth” -- A raw piece of woolen cloth that will shrink when wet and tear a bigger hole than ever. “A worse rent” -- Our word for “schism.” The “patch” thus does more harm than good. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 16-17:

These sayings have no obvious connection with the preceding, although most commentators seek to establish a relation. The metaphorical language somewhat disguises the radical content of the sayings. The incompatibility of old and new is illustrated with the homely figures of patching with new cloth an old fabric and pouring new wine into used wineskins. The meaning of the figures is that the Gospel is incompatible with the Law. The order Jesus initiates is not a patchwork of elements derived from Judaism and pronouncements of Jesus. It is as new as was the revelation of the Torah through Moses. The statement is as emphatic as anything we read in Paul, although it is in metaphorical language. The novelty of the Gospel should not be overstated, nor is it overstated here; the declaration means Judaism is not to determine the form the Gospel takes. Whatever value elements of Judaism have in the new order they have from the new order, and not from themselves. Jesus is the supreme interpreter of the Law and the Prophets. (JBC)

The “unshrunk cloth” will shrink the next time the garment is washed, thus putting a disastrous strain on the old fibers. No would bottle new wine while in its first fermentation; but even after the bottling some fermentation is bound to occur, and only elastic new skins can stand the pressure. (IB)

Verse 17:

“Old wineskins” -- Not glass “bottles” but wineskins used as bottles is true in Palestine even today, yet these are goatskins with the rough part inside. Our word bottle originally carried the true meaning, being a bottle of leather. In Spain wine is still brought to market in pig-skins. The new wine will ferment and crack the dried-up old skins. The wine is spilled, and poured out. (INT--Robinson)

Summary from LToJC:

We scarcely wonder at the feelings of John the Baptist’s disciples as months of John’s weary captivity had passed, with no release in sight. Uncertain what to expect,

they seem to have oscillated between Machaerus and Capernaum. Any hope in their Master's vindication and deliverance lay in the possibilities involved in the announcement he had made of Jesus as the Christ. Ad it was to Him that their Master's finger had pointed them. Indeed, some of Jesus' earliest and most intimate disciples had turned to Jesus even before the Baptist's imprisonment.

His reception of publicans and sinners they could understand; their own Master had not rejected them. But why eat and drink with them? Why feasting, and this in a time when fasting and prayer would have seemed especially appropriate? In fact, wasn't fasting always appropriate? Yet this new Messiah had not taught his disciples either to fast or what to pray! The Pharisees, in their anxiety to separate between Jesus and His Forerunner, must have told them all this again and again, and pointed to the contrast.

At any rate, it was at the instigation of the Pharisees, and in company with them, that the disciples of John composed to Jesus this question about fasting and prayer, immediately after the feast in the house of the converted Levi-Matthew. We must bear in mind that fasting and prayer, or else fasting and alms, or all the three were always combined. Fasting represented the negative, prayer and alms the positive element, in the forgiveness of sins. Fasting, as self-punishment and mortification, would avert the anger of God and calamities.

Rabbinism gave an altogether external aspect to fasting. In this it only developed to its utmost consequences a theology against which the Prophets of old had already protested. Perhaps, the Jews are not solitary in their misconception and perversion of fasting. In their view, it was the readiest means of turning aside any threatening calamity, such as drought, pestilence, or national danger. The reason being that fasting was self-punishment and mortification, not because a fast meant mourning (for sin, not for its punishment), and therefore indicated humiliation, acknowledgment of sin, and repentance. The second and fifth days of the week (Monday and Thursday) were those appointed for public fasts, because Moses was supposed to have gone up the Mountain for the second tablets of the Law on a Thursday and to have returned on a Monday. The self-introspection of Pharisaism led many to fast on these two days all the year round, just as in temple-times not a few would offer daily trespass-offerings for sins of which they were ignorant. Then there were such painful, and trivial details of externalism, as those which ruled how, on a less strict fast, a person might wash and anoint; while, on the strictest fast, it was prohibited even to salute one another.

It may well have been that it was on one of these weekly fasts that the feast of Levi-Matthew had taken place, and that this explains the expression: "And John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting (Mark 2:18)." This would give point to the complaint, "Thy disciples fast not." Looking back upon the standpoint from which they viewed fasting, it is easy to perceive why Jesus could not have sanctioned, not even tolerated, the practice among his disciples, as little as Paul could tolerate among Judaizing Christians the, in itself indifferent, practice of circumcision. But it was not so easy to explain this at the time to the disciples of John. For, to understand it, implied already entire transformation from the old to the new spirit. Still more difficult must it have been to do it in such manner, as at the same time to lay down principles that would rule all similar questions to all ages. But our Lord did both, and even thus proved His Divine Mission.

The last recorded testimony of the Baptist had pointed to Christ as the “Bridegroom.” John had applied this in a manner which appealed to popular custom. As he had pointed out, the Presence of Jesus marked the marriage week. By universal consent, and according to Rabbinic Law, this was to be a time of unmixed festivity. Even on the Day of Atonement a bride was allowed to relax one of the ordinances of that strictest fast. During the marriage week all mourning was to be suspended--even the obligation of the prescribed daily prayers ceased. It was regarded as a religious duty to gladden the bride and bridegroom. Was it not, then, inconsistent on the part of John’s disciples to expect the “sons of the bride-chamber” to fast, so long as the Bridegroom was with them?

In general, the two illustrations employed--that of the piece of undressed cloth (or, according to Luke, a piece torn from a new garment) sewed upon the rent of an old garment, and that of the new wine put into the old wineskin--must not be too closely pressed in regard to their language. They seem chiefly to imply this: “You ask, ‘why do we fast often, but thy disciples fast not’. You are mistaken in supposing that the old garment can be retained, and merely its rents made good by patching it with a piece of new cloth. Not to speak of the incongruity, the effect would only be to make the rent ultimately worse. The old garment will not bear mending with the undressed cloth.” Christ’s was not merely a reformation: all things must become new. Or, again, take the other view of it -- as the old garment cannot be patched from the new, so, on the other hand, can the new wine of the Kingdom be confined in the old forms. It would burst those wineskins. The spirit must have its corresponding form of expression; but that form must be adapted, and correspond to it. Not the old with a little of the new to keep to hold it together where it is rent; but the new, and that not in the old wineskins, but in a form corresponding to the substance. Such are the two final principles -- the one primarily addressed to the Pharisees, the other to the disciples of John, by which the illustrative teaching concerning the marriage feast, with its bridal garment and wine of banquet, is carried far beyond the original question of the disciples of John, and receives an application to all time.

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32. Read Mark 2:18-22

(1) Matthew 9:14-17

(2) Luke 5:33-39

Mark 2:18-22

- 18 The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were accustomed to fast. People came to him and objected, "Why do the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?"
- 19 Jesus answered them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast.
- 20 But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.
- 21 No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak. If he does, its fullness pulls away, the new from the old, and the tear gets worse.
- 22 Likewise, no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will

burst the skins, and both the wine and the skins are ruined. Rather, new wine is poured into fresh wineskins."

Verses 18-20:

John's disciples formed a distinct group for a long time after their master's arrest and death. "used to fast" is an over translation: the Pharisees still fasted in Mark's time, and so perhaps did John's disciples. "Disciples... of the Pharisees" is based on a bad Greek text. Read as: "Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting." This was the concrete situation presupposed in the story. The complaint in the preceding passage is addressed to the disciples; this one is addressed to Jesus. Clearly Mark (cf. verse 20), and perhaps those who handed down the tradition before him, had in mind the question: Why do Christians fast if Jesus did not? Or perhaps: Why did Jesus' own immediate disciples not fast, since fasting was a pious practice? This was no doubt a subject of controversy at a later time; but the answer went back to Jesus, and was stated, characteristically, in the form of another question: "Can the wedding guests (really the close friends of the bridegroom) fast?" The point of comparison is not the persons but the time: the kingdom of God is at hand (1:15) and the powers of darkness are being overthrown; it is not time for fasting and mourning. The answer, "as long as ... fast" may be only an example of Mark's underscoring the obvious; more likely it is meant to introduce and strengthen the contrast of verse 20 which is generally looked upon as secondary, its purpose being to justify the later Christian observance of fasting. This observance did not, however, always have in mind the death of Christ, or his absence (sometimes fasting was a normal practice of piety), any more than John's fasting referred only to John's death; that of the Pharisees certainly had no such reference. (IB)

Verse 18:

"John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting" -- Probably Levi's feast happened on one of the weekly fast-days (second and fifth days of the weeks for the stricter Jews). So there was a clash of standpoints. The disciples of John sided with the Pharisees in the Jewish ceremonial ritualistic observances. John was still a prisoner at Machaerus. John was more of an ascetic than Jesus (Matthew 18:1; Luke 7:33-35), but neither one pleased all the popular critics. These learners or disciples of John had missed the spirit of their leader when they lined up with the Pharisees against Jesus. But there was no real congeniality between the Pharisees and the asceticism of John the Baptist. The Pharisees hated John who had denounced them as a brood of vipers. Here the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees join in criticizing Jesus and his disciples. Later we shall see Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians, who bitterly detested each other, making common cause against Jesus. So today we find various hostile groups combining against our Lord and Savior. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 19:

[Can the wedding guests fast](#) -- Jesus' answer to the charge of verse 18 takes the form of the parabolic saying based on such OT passages as Hosea 2:16-20; Isaiah 54:5-6; Jeremiah 2:2; Ezekiel 16, in which God's relation to his covenant people is portrayed as a marriage. (JBC)

[while the bridegroom is with them](#) -- Possibly this means simply while the wedding is in progress. But Jesus may have intended an allegorical reference to himself as the Messiah-Bridegroom. In either case Jesus' answer means that the finality of the

matter (the eschaton) is here, and hence there is no reason for his disciples to fast and mourn. (JBC)

For Mark the passage shows that Jesus' Messianic authority takes precedence over Mosaic observance; his presence is a source of eschatological joy, and indeed the coming of God's reign is connected with his very person and will entail suffering. (JBC)

Two parabolic sayings now stress the incompatibility of the new economy with the old Mosaic economy; Jesus' disciples can no longer adhere to the Baptist's manner of life without compromising their new view of things. (JBC)

"The sons of the bride chamber" -- Not merely the groomsmen, but the guests also. Jesus here adopts the Baptist's own metaphor (John 3:29), changing the friend of the bridegroom to sons of the bride chamber. Jesus identifies himself with the bridegroom of the OT (Hosea 2:21), God in his covenant relation with Israel. Mourning does not suit the wedding feast. Mark, Matthew, and Luke all give the three parables (bridegroom, unfilled cloth, new wineskins) illustrating and defending the conduct of Jesus in feasting with Levi on a Jewish feast-day. Luke 5:36 calls these parables. Jesus here seems to be challenging the traditions of the ecclesiastics, as well as being revolutionary in his emphasis on the spiritual instead of the ritualistic and ceremonial. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 21-22:

The twin parables that follow have been inserted here by Mark as a further answer to the question in verse 18. What their original connection was we do not know.-- was it Sabbath observance, sacrifices, the whole scribal tradition? Here their point would seem to be the danger to the old religion rather than to the new; the new "patch" will tear away the edges of the rotten garment; the fresh ferment of the new "wine" will split open the old "wineskins" and ruin them. If the parables originally referred to fasting, we should expect an old patch on a new garment, and old, perhaps, spoiled, wine in new wineskins. What is clear from the passage as a whole is that Jesus did not practice fasting, or require it of his disciples; at a later date the church practiced it regularly. "But new wine must be put into new bottles", or possible, "new wine is for fresh skins," is found in a number of excellent manuscripts, but it is probably a gloss from the text of Luke 5:38 where, along with 5:39, it forms one of two characteristic Lukan homiletical comments on the parable.(IB)

Verse 21:

unshrunk cloth on an old garment -- The garment may be a symbol of the universe, which Jesus does not merely patch up but creates anew (cf. Hebrews 1:10-12; Acts 10:11ff.; 11:5ff.). (JBC)

"Seweth on" -- This phrase is used only here in the NT, although the uncompounded verb (to sew) is common enough, sews upon: in Matthew 9:16 and Luke 5:37 use put upon or clap upon. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 22:

new wine into old wineskins -- Wine may be a symbol of a new era (Genesis 9:20; 49:11-12; Numbers 13:23-24); Jesus refers to himself as the one who dispenses the new wine at the Messianic banquet. (JBC)

"But new wine into fresh wineskins"-- This is genuine in Luke 5:38 and may be so here. (INT--Robinson)

33. Read Luke 5:33-39

(1) Matthew 9:14-17

(2) Mark 2:18-22

Luke 5:33-39

- 33 And they said to him, "The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and the disciples of the Pharisees do the same; but yours eat and drink."
- 34 Jesus answered them, "Can you make the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?"
- 35 But the days will come, and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days."
- 36 And he also told them a parable. "No one tears a piece from a new cloak to patch an old one. Otherwise, he will tear the new and the piece from it will not match the old cloak.
- 37 Likewise, no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins, and it will be spilled, and the skins will be ruined.
- 38 Rather, new wine must be poured into fresh wineskins.
- 39 (And) no one who has been drinking old wine desires new, for he says, 'The old is good.'"

Verses 33-35:

In his editing of the Marcan material, Luke closely connects the following series of parables with the preceding episode. To balance the sentence structure he refers to the "disciples of John [the Baptist] and... those of the Pharisees": actually, the Pharisee as Pharisee had no disciples, even though as a rabbi he might. Mark 2:18, therefore, is by contrast less elegant but more precise. (JBC)

The better manuscript support the punctuation of verse 33 as a statement rather than a question (contrast Mark). "The disciples of the Pharisees" is a peculiar phrase, for a Pharisee as a rabbi could have disciples, but not as a Pharisee. It is a plausible conjecture that "the Pharisees" were introduced into the story--at some pre-Markan stage --to make it another "conflict." In that case the earlier contrast was between the practice of the "disciples of John" and that of Jesus' followers. "Groomsmen" is the specific meaning of the Semitism translated "wedding guests." The gospel tradition makes it clear that neither Jesus nor his disciples practiced fasting, but an early second-century Christian catechism, indicates that the early church did so. Therefore, verse 35 may be an early allegorical addition to a parable that originally compared the Kingdom of God to a wedding festival. It makes Jesus declare that his disciples were justified in fasting after his death, although it was known both that they had not done so during his lifetime and that this omission had been approved by Jesus. It is improbable that Jesus predicted his death and justified a later ecclesiastical practice after this fashion. (IB)

Verse 33:

prayers -- Formal prayer at specific times (cf. 1 Timothy 2:1). Luke was certainly acquainted with the Baptist's style of prayer (cf. 11:1). (JBC)

fast often -- The Pharisees fasted twice a week (18:12); on Thursday, in honor of Moses' ascent of Mt. Sinai; on Monday, commemorating his descent. They never fasted, however, on the Sabbath, nor is it likely that he did so at a wedding feast. (JBC)

The word “often” is found only in Luke. It is a common word for thick, compact, often. And make “supplications” (prayer) is also found only in Luke. “But thine” shows a sharp contrast between the conduct of the disciples of Jesus and those of John and the Pharisees who here appear together as critics of Jesus and his disciples (Mark 2:18; Matthew 9:14), although Luke does not bring that out sharply. It is probable that Levi had his reception for Jesus on one of the Jewish fast days and, if so, this would give special edge to their criticism. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 35:

[taken away](#) -- A clear enough reference to Jesus’ death, and possibly to the Servant of Isaiah (Isaiah 53:8, 11 [LXX]). By his continual insistence that he disciple must carry his cross after Jesus, Luke places the present age of the church within this time of mourning. Although full eschatological glory came with Jesus’ ascension, it is not yet fully experienced by the church. The early church fasted (Acts 13:2f.; 14:22). (JBC)

Verses 36-39:

With an editorial addition, Luke connects three independent sayings; their abrupt intrusion is much more evident in Mark and Matthew. Typical of the Bible, this whole section (verses 27-39) is not built up by chronological or logical sequence but rather by association of words and ideas for mnemonic purpose. (JBC)

According to Mark, the first of these two parables declared that a patch of unbleached cloth will shrink after it has been sewed on a coat, and leave a tear that is worse than ever. Its parallelism with its twin is not as direct in Luke’s version, which deplores ruining “a new garment” in order to patch an “old,” since “the piece from the new will not match the old.” “New wine” is unfermented wine (therefore “must”). “Old wineskins” are hard and dry, and will burst when fermentation occurs. The parables teach that one must not mix the new with the old, but pass no judgment on the relative merits of the one and the other. In their Marcan and Lukan application they point the moral that the new Christian message and the old ceremonial forms of Judaism are incompatible; more specifically, that the new gospel has nothing to do with the old rite of fasting. Since their original context cannot be recovered, it is idle to speculate on the truth Jesus meant them to illustrate. (IB)

Verse 36:

[tears a piece from a new garment](#) -- Luke deliberately rewrites the Marcan parable. Mark is truer to the Palestinian practice of not sewing a raw unbleached or unfulled piece of cloth onto an older garment. The new piece would shrink and thereby make a worse tear, Luke’s revision has more of an aesthetic touch. (JBC)

Verses 37-38:

[new wine ... into old wineskins](#) -- An old skin would stretch and burst with the fermenting juice. Bottles made of animal skins, attested in the Bible (Genesis 21:14b; Psalm 119:83; Job 32:19), are still in use by Bedouins in the Near East today. (JBC)

Verse 39:

This final saying, found only in Luke, has textual difficulties. The preferred reading is: “no one, after drinking old wine, wants new wine; for he says, “the old is good.” In the present setting, Luke is insisting that anyone rigidly and proudly bound up with the past can scarcely sustain the fresh vitality of the new. The old and the new seldom meet peacefully. There may be an allusion here to the problems between Jewish

Christians and Gentile Christians in the early church. The final saying of Luke, however, seems to restrain one from completely rejecting the old; the new, to be palatable, must contain the genuine spirit of the ancient Law. (JBC)

The best manuscripts have “the old is good.” The prejudiced person will not even try the new, or admit that it has any merits. He knows that the old is pleasant, and that is enough--he will not change. This is Christ’s picture of the reactionary Pharisee. (INT--Robinson)

Session 8

Overview from LToJC:

The history of the call of Matthew has another, to some extent subordinate, historical interest, for it was no doubt speedily followed by the calling of the other Apostles. This is the chronological succession in the Synoptic narratives. It also gives us some insight into the history of those, whom Jesus chose as bearers of His Gospel. The difficulties connected with tracing family descent or possible relationships between the Apostles are so great, that we must forego all hope of arriving at any definite conclusion. Therefore, we will not enter on details about the genealogy of the Apostles, and the varied arrangement of their names in the Gospels. First, it appears that only the calling of those to the Apostolate is related, which in some sense is typical; namely, that Peter and Andrew, of James and John, of Philip and Bartholomew (generally supposed the same as Nathanael), and of Matthew the publican. Second, there is something which attaches to each of the others. Thomas, who is called Didymus (which means “twin”), is closely connected to Matthew, both in Luke’s Gospel and in that of Matthew himself. James is expressly named as the son of Alphaeus or Clopas. This we know to have been also the name of Matthew-Levi’s father. But, as the name was a common one, no inference can be drawn from it, and it does not seem likely that the father of Matthew was also that of James, Judas, and Simon, for these three seem to have been brothers. Judas is designated by Matthew as Lebbaeus, from the Hebrew Thaddaeus, following the analogy of the Jewish name Thodah, from “praise.” In that case both Lebbaeus and Thaddaeus, would point to the heartiness and the thanksgiving of the Apostle, and therefore to his character. Luke simply designates him Judas of James, which means that he was the brother (less probably, the son) of James. Thus his real name would have been Judas Lebbaeus, and his surname Thaddaeus. Closely connected with these two (James and Thaddaeus) we have in all the Gospels, Simon, surnamed Zelotes or Cananean (not Canaanite), both terms indicating his original connection with the Galilean Zealot party, the “Zealots for the Law.” His position in the Apostolic catalog, and the testimony of scholars, seem to point him out as the son of Clopas, and brother of James, and of Judas Lebbaeus. [Therefore, we have James, Judas, and Lebbaeus as brothers also.]. In a sense, these three were cousins of Jesus, since, according to the same scholars, Clopas was the brother of Joseph, while the sons of Zebedee (John and James) real cousins of Jesus, their mother Salome being a sister of the Virgin Mary. Finally, we have Judas Iscariot, “a man of Kerioth,” a town in Judah. Thus the betrayer alone would be of Judean origin, the others all of Galilean; and this may throw light on not a little in his after-history.

No further reference other than this briefest of sketches seems necessary, although on comparison it is clear that the Apostolic catalogues in the Gospels are arranged in three groups, each of them beginning with respectively the name (Simon, Philip, and James, the son of Alphaeus). This, however, we may remark, how narrow, after all, was the Apostolic circle, and how closely connected most of its members. And yet, as we remember the history of their calling, or those notices attached to their names which afford a glimpse into their history, it was a circle thoroughly representative of those who would gather around Jesus. Most marked and most solemn of all, it was after a night of solitary prayer on the mountain-side, that Jesus at early dawn “called his disciples, and of

them he chose twelve, whom he also named Apostles,” that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sickness and to cast out devils.

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3. IN GALILEE

a. SELECTION OF THE TWELVE

Luke 6:12-16
Mark 3:13-19
Matthew 10:1-4

1. Read Luke 6:12-16 entirely through one time.
(1) Matthew 10:1-4 (2) Mark 3:13-19
2. Read Luke 6:12-13
(1) No reference
3. Read Luke 6:14-16
(1) Acts 1:13

Luke 6:12-16

- 12 In those days he departed to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God.
- 13 When day came, he called his disciples to himself, and from them he chose Twelve, whom he also named apostles:
- 14 Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew,
- 15 Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called a Zealot,
- 16 and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Verse 12:

[he departed to the mountain to pray](#) -- Some versions read “into the hills to pray.” Once again, before a decision crucial to his Messianic mission, Jesus prays; atop a mountain, where Jesus communes with his Father, he chooses 12 disciples. Jesus is conscious of establishing a New Israel, symbolically a people of 12 tribes. (JBC)

“into the hills” and “into a mountain” are two other versions. (IB)

Luke alone has “to pray” as he so often notes the habit of prayer in Jesus. “In prayer to God” -- this phrase does not mean “place of prayer” or synagogue as in Acts 16:13, but the actual prayer of Jesus to the Father all night long. He needed the Father’s guidance now in the choice of the Apostles in the morning. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 13:

[whom he also named apostles](#) -- Mark indicates that Jesus “sent” the Twelve to preach, but here in Luke, Jesus is said to have called them apostles. Each of the other

three Evangelists uses the word “apostle” but once, but it is more common in Luke (9:10; 17:5; 22:14;24:10). For the most part, Luke follows the list of the Twelve as given in Matthew, except that he replaces the name of Thaddaeus with that of “Judas, the son of James” (as in Acts 1:13). The name Levi does not occur, but Matthew does. (JBC)

“when it was day”-- when day came, after the long night of prayer, He chose from them twelve. There was a large group of “disciples” or “learners” whom he “called” to him, and from among whom he chose. It was a crisis in the work of Jesus. Jesus assumed full responsibility even for the choice of Judas who was not forced upon Jesus by the Twelve. “You did not choose me, but I chose you” (John 15:16). “whom he also named apostles” -- So then Jesus gave the twelve chosen disciples this appellation. It remains doubtful whether they were not brought into Mark from Luke 6:13 where they are undoubtedly genuine. See Matthew 10:2 where the connection with sending them out by twos in the third tour of Galilee. The word “apostle” is applied to others, like Barnabas, besides these twelve including the Apostle Paul who is on a par with them in rank and authority, and even to mere messengers of the church (II Corinthians 8:23). But these twelve apostles stand apart from all others in that they were all chosen at once by Jesus himself “that they might be with him” (Mark 3:14), to be trained by Jesus himself and to interpret him and his message to the world. In the nature of the case they could have no successors as they had to be personal witnesses to the life and resurrection of Jesus (Acts 1:22) (INT--Robinson)

Jesus chose “twelve” from among a much larger group (cf. verse 17). Apart from Peter, the sons of Zebedee, and Judas Iscariot, the members of this inner circle remain little more than names. Apocryphal “Acts” of Andrew, Matthew, Thomas, and others proliferated in the third and later centuries. Paul’s use of “the twelve” (I Corinthians 15:5) as a title for the disciples makes it improbable any hypothesis that the number was arbitrarily fixed by the early church. It is possible that Jesus himself intended “the twelve” to symbolize the true Israel that would enter God’s kingdom. In early church usage “apostles” included Paul and Barnabas and other missionaries (Romans 16:7). The limitation of the title to the original group (Matthew 10:2; Mark 6:30; Revelations 21:14; and six times in Luke) would therefore appear to be late. It is an anachronism on Luke’s part to assert that Jesus conferred it. (IB)

Verses 14-16:

“Peter” (rock) is almost certainly a translation of the Aramaic “Cephas” (John 1:42 and often in Galatians and I Corinthians). The nickname may represent an estimate of the disciple’s character, despite his behavior at Gethsemane and after Jesus’ arrest. More probably it recalls the fact that, as the first disciple to be called, or as the first of Jesus’ followers to be convinced of the Lord’s resurrection (24:33-34; I Corinthians 15:5), he was “the rock” on which the church was built (Matthew 16:18). The gospel tradition differs as to when the name was conferred: according to John’s Gospel, it was at Jesus’ first encounter with him; according to Mark and Luke, it was when the twelve were chosen (although most Lukan manuscripts read “Simon Peter” in 5:8); and according to Matthew, it was after he had confessed Jesus’ messiah-ship at Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:18). “Andrew” is a pure Greek name. Since Luke had not reproduced Mark’s earlier reference to him (1:16), he now identifies him for the readers of the Gospel as Peter’s brother. “James and John” have already been introduced as

“sons of Zebedee” (5:10), and that title is not used in this instance. Mark’s enigmatical “sons of thunder” is also omitted. “Philip” -- another pure Greek name -- is described in John 1:44 and 12:21 as a native of Bethsaida. The disciple is not to be confused with the evangelist of Acts 6:5; 8:4-13, 26-40. “Bartholomew” is probably “son of Ptolemy”. “Matthew” has sometimes been identified with “Nathanael of John’s Gospel, since both names mean “gift of God.” “Thomas” is a Hellenized form of the Hebrew word for “twin” (cf. John 11:16). It is arbitrary exegesis to identify “James the son of Alphaeus with either “Levi the son of Alphaeus” (Mark 2:14) or “James the younger” (Mark 15:40). The second Simon in the list is called “the Cananaean” in Mark, a title that is probably the transliteration into Greek of an Aramaic word that Luke translates “the Zealot.” The title may have been nothing more than a nickname, for there is no evidence that members of the revolutionary party in Palestine were known as “Zealots” before 66 A.D. No doubt “Judas the son of James” is the “Judas (not Iscariot) of John 14:22, although it is clear that there has been some primitive confusion about the name of this particular disciple. He is called “Thaddaeus” in most manuscripts of Mark and Matthew, and the Codex Bezae text of those Gospels has “Lebbaeus.” The second “Judas” in the list is called “the son of Simon Iscariot” in John 6:71. “Iscariot” is probably a Hebraism meaning “man of Kerioth”--a village on the southern fringes of Judea. [Note: all are from Galilee except Judas Iscariot who is from Judea.] Another list of the same names, in slightly different order, and omitting Judas Iscariot, appears in Acts 1:13. (IB)

Verse 16:

[who became a traitor](#) -- He gave no signs of treachery when chosen. (INT-- Robinson)

* * * * *

4. Read Mark 3:12-19 entirely through one time.
 (1) Matthew 10:1-4 (2) Luke 6:12-16
5. Read Mark 3:13
 (1) No reference
6. Read Mark 3:14
 (1) Mark 6:7
7. Read Mark 3:15-16
 (1) No reference
8. Read Mark 3:17
 (1) Matthew 16:18 (2) John 1:42
9. Read Mark 3:18-19
 (1) No reference

Mark 3:13-19

- 13 He went up the mountain and summoned those whom he wanted and they came to him.

- 14 He appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) that they might be with him
and he might send them forth to preach
15 and to have authority to drive out demons:
16 (he appointed the twelve:) Simon, whom he named Peter;
17 James, son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James, whom he named
Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder;
18 Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus;
Thaddeus, Simon the Cananean,
19 and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

Overview from IB:

The appointment of the twelve was a subject of wide interest in the early church, as the Synoptic Gospels and the book of Acts and the appendix to John (chapter 21) make clear. It was viewed by some as the inauguration or “founding” of the church; by many scholars today it is looked upon as preparatory to Jesus’ announcement of his claim to be the Messiah of all Israel, since twelve was the number of the tribes. On the other hand, twelve was a common and a convenient number of disciples--as in the founding of new houses of medieval religious orders, although here the Lord’s example was decisive--and the purpose of their call as stated in verses 14-15 is scarcely a description of the later apostolic office. The substance of the section is not a narrative; instead, it is, as in Matthew, simply a list of the twelve disciples to which Mark has given an editorial introduction, somewhat out of keeping with the accounts of the “call” of the two pairs of brothers and of Levi, already given in 1:16-20; 2:14. It is an old list, as the word “Boanerges” shows.

Verse 13:

He went up the mountain -- As in Matthew 5:1, where this same notice introduces the Sermon on the Mount, the locality sets the scene for a solemn act of Jesus. (JBC)

Some versions read “into the hills, and it is claimed there that this is the correct reading. How this place reference attaches to 3:7 is hard to see; perhaps Jesus was thought of first as leaving Capernaum for the shore of the lake to the south and west, then as going up into the hills west of the lake. But little weight can be given to Mark’s topography, and these two paragraphs (verse 7-12, 13-19), in any event, look like an insertion into the story, separating the first series of controversies and the appended one in verses 20-30. (IB)

“he goeth up into the mountain” -- in some versions. So Matthew (5:1), and Luke (6:12) adds “to pray.” Neither Gospel gives the name of the mountain, assuming it as well known, probably not far from the lake. “Whom he himself would” -- whether by personal imitation or through the disciples Jesus invites or calls to himself a select number out of the vast crowd by the sea, those whom he really wished to be with him. “They went off to him” -- Luke states that Jesus “continued all night in prayer, to God.” It was a crisis in the ministry of Jesus. This select group up in the hills probably respected the long agony of Jesus although they did not comprehend his motive. They formed a sort of spiritual body-guard around the Master during his night vigil in the mountain. (INT--Robinson)

summoned those whom he wanted -- Mark emphasizes the authority of Jesus’

action. (JBC)

This scene is formal, and might well be the subject of a large painting. Jesus' method in "calling" disciples is very different elsewhere in the Gospels. (IB)

they came to him -- A verbal reminiscence of 1:20. Their coming is a response to Jesus' summons to be associated with him; in the parallel verse in Matthew 5:1 the disciples come to hear Jesus teach. (JBC)

Verse 14:

He appointed -- Literally, "he made," a Semitic phrase used in the LXX of the appointment of priests (I Kings 12:31; 13:33; II Chronicles 2:18), of Moses and Aaron (I Samuel 12:6), and in the NT of Jesus as Lord and Messiah (Acts 2:36; Hebrews 3:2); cf. Mark 1:17. (JBC)

"He appointed twelve" -- this was a second selection out of those invited to the hills and after the night of prayer and after day came (Luke 6:13). Why he chose twelve we are not told, probably because there were twelve tribes in Israel. It was a good round number at any rate. They were to be princes in the new Israel (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30). Luke (6:13-16) also gives the list of the twelve at this point while Matthew (10:1-4) postpones giving the names until they are sent out in Galilee. There is a fourth list in Acts 1:13. The three groups of four begin alike (Simon, Philip, James). There is some difficulties. "Whom he also named apostles" -- the meaning is that Jesus himself gave the name apostle or missionary, to this group of twelve. The word is applied in the NT to others besides as delegates or messengers of churches (II Corinthians 8:23; Philippians 2:25), and messenger (John 13:16). It is applied also to Paul on a par with the twelve (Galatians 1:1, 11) and also to Barnabas (Acts 14:14), and perhaps also Timothy and Silas (I Timothy 2:6ff.). Two purposes of Jesus are mentioned by Mark in the choice of these twelve, that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth. They were not ready to be sent forth until they had been with Jesus for some time. This is one of the chief tasks of Jesus to train this group of men. There were two purposes in sending them forth--one to preach, the other to have power to cast out demons. This double ministry of preaching and healing was to mark their work. The two things are, however, different, and one does not necessarily involve the other. (INT--Robinson)

The word "appointed" is better than "ordained" as found in other versions. (IB)

"Twelve whom also he named apostles" has strong manuscript support (see also 6:30); but the relative clause is probably a gloss derived from the parallel in Luke. (IB)

twelve -- Jesus symbolically claims to found the 12 tribes of the eschatological Israel. (JBC)

that they might be with him -- This expression comes close to being Mark's definition of the Christian disciple (2:19; 3:7; 4:36; 5:18, 40; 8:10; 9:8; 11:11; 14:17, 67; 15:41). Its theological significance is also evident from its frequency in the communion of the last evening (14:14, 17, 18, 20, 33), which is shattered by Judas "with the crowd" (verse 43) and Peter "with the guards" (verse 54), denying that he had been "with the Nazarene Jesus" (verse 67). (JBC)

"with him"; that is, in constant association, as disciples with a teacher. (IB)

Verse 15:

that they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach and to have authority to drive out demons -- Mark alone mentions in this context that Jesus was to

confer upon the Twelve his own Messianic powers. The shift in subject from “they” to “he,” the awkwardness of the syntax, and the fact that the other Synoptics more logically mention these powers in connection with the mission of the Twelve, all indicate that Mark added these clauses as an anticipation of the mission charge in 6:7 where they rightly belong. (JBC)

“to preach ... to cast out demons”, a mission obviously fulfilled in 6:7-13, 30; this is what Mark has in mind, not the later apostolic “mission” of the church. The twelve were first to be with him as intimate disciples, then later to go out as missionaries; that is, as evangelists and exorcists. (IB)

Verse 16:

(he appointed the twelve:) -- Mark resumes 3:14a after his parenthesis about their powers. (JBC)

Simon, whom he named Peter -- All the lists place Peter first (Matthew 10:2; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13); Mark alone suggests that his name was changed on this occasion. (JBC)

The text is uncertain at this point; some manuscripts read “and he appointed the twelve”, some “he appointed first Simon”; while others omit any further introduction. But many copyists apparently felt that some introduction to the list was needed; perhaps the original one survives at the beginning of verse 14. In that case, Mark had inserted the two purpose clauses, thus leaving later copyists with the feeling that verse 16 began too abruptly. (IB)

“Simon ... Peter” -- these double names (Hebrew or Aramaic and Greek) were common among first-century Jews. But later Christian reflection found a deeper meaning in “Simon = Peter” (cf. Matthew 16:17-28; John 1:42), as also in other apostolic names (for example, Saul = Paul). Peter heads the list, as the rock disciple, so called not as a symbol of his firmness, perhaps, but as the first to be laid -- was he not the first to see the risen Lord (I Corinthians 15:5)? But it was Peter’s actual place in the earliest history of the church, as in that of Jesus’ band of disciples during his lifetime, not merely the fact that he was the first to see the risen Lord, that gave him this place of honor in the list. (IB)

“Simon, he surnamed Peter” -- this surname Jesus gave in addition to Simon. Here then is a direct reference to what is told in John 1:42 when Jesus met Simon for the first time. Mark here reflects Peter’s own words. Luke (6:14) simply says “whom he also surnamed Peter.” (INT--Robinson)

Verse 17:

Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder -- The original Greek word is not a clear transcription of any recognizable Hebrew or Aramaic phrase that would correspond to Mark’s translation. The common explanation is that it reflects a Greek word which means “sons of tumult”. Another suggestion is that it represents yet another Greek word that means “sons of wrath,” that is, hot-tempered. No satisfying explanation has been suggested for the vocal difference at the beginning of the name and so it remains obscure. (JBC)

“Boanerges, which is sons of thunder” -- this Hebrew nickname is given only by Mark and the reason for it is not clear. It may refer to the fiery temperament revealed in Luke 9:34 when James and John wanted to call down fire on the Samaritan villages that were unfriendly to them. The word literally means sons of tumult, sons of thunder in

Syriac. No other epithets are given by Mark except for descriptions to distinguish as Simon the Cananaean (or Zealot) and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him. Andrew, and Philip are both Greek names. Bartholomew, son of Tolmai, is the Nathanael of John's Gospel (John 21:2). He probably had both names. Matthew is a Hebrew name meaning gift of God. Thomas is Hebrew and means twin (John 11:16). There are two uses of the name of James. Thaddeus is another name for Lebbaeus. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 18:

Andrew -- A good Greek name, which is otherwise attested as borne by a Jew. Mark put him in fourth place after the two privileged brothers who, like Simon, were given descriptive names by Jesus. (JBC)

Simon the Cananaean -- "Canaaanite" is a mistranslation of the original Aram word which Luke 6:15 correctly renders as "the zealot", a member of the chauvinistic and warlike anti-Roman party in Palestine. (JBC)

Verses 17-18:

"James and John ... and Andrew" -- were called simultaneously with Peter (1:16-20). Moreover, for Mark, they -- or at least Peter, James, and John -- formed an inner nucleus of intimate disciples (cf. 5:37; 13:3). "Boanerges" -- the word is given in various forms in the manuscripts. Some suggestions to its meaning have been: "sons of thunder" and "constant noise" or "constant disturbance", and "sons of the thunderstorm." What was originally implied in the word is unknown. "Levi" (2:14) -- does not appear in the list; therefore, some have supposed him identical with James. (?) "The Canaanite" cannot mean "from Cana" as Jerome supposed, but rather at one-time an adherent of the early Zealot (or revolutionary) party. Luke gives "the Zealot." (IB)

Verse 19:

"Iscariot" -- is hardly "man of Kerioth", nor is it "from the tribe of Issachar" which was Jerome's conjecture. It probably means "sicarius" ("assassin"), a name ("sicarii") given the Zealots during the war against the Rome in 66-70 A.D. The man's name was Judas, a common and, of course, an honored Jewish name at the time (= Judah); "Iscariot" was a byname, and may have arisen after his treachery in "betraying" Jesus, handing him over to his enemies. (IB)

The rest of the names vary in the lists. This has led some to think that the choice of the Twelve is a story invented by Christians to substantiate their claim to be the new Israel. The existence of the college, however, is a secure and primitive fact of the NT (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:28-30; I Corinthians 15:5), and there is no reason to think that it did not owe its origin to an appointment by Jesus. (JBC)

The list of the apostles appears four times in the NT (Luke 6:12-16; Matthew 10:2-4; Acts 1:13-14; and here). In addition, other disciples appear in John -- for example, Nathanael -- and elsewhere. That there is some uncertainty about one or two of the names is not surprising -- for later history they were names and nothing more. In Jewish tradition we have a similar uncertainty in the case of the names of some of the disciples of Rabbi Akiba, the great teacher and saint who died a martyr during the war of 132-135 A.D. (IB)

"He cometh into a house" -- He comes home from the mountain, probably the house of Simon as in John 1:29. Mark passes by the Sermon on the Mount given by Matthew and Luke on the mountain (plateau on the mountain in Luke). We have to

allow a reasonable interval for Mark's narrative. Mark's Gospel is full of action and does not undertake to tell all that Jesus did and said. (INT--Robinson)

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10. Read Matthew 10:1-4 entirely through one time.

(1) Mark 3:14-19

(2) Luke 6:13-16

Matthew 10:1-4

- 1 Then he summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to drive them out and to cure every disease and every illness.
- 2 The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John;
- 3 Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus;
- 4 Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

Verse 1:

Matthew (with Luke) expands the conferring of power in Mark 6:7 by the addition of the power of healing diseases. This makes explicit what is implicit in Mark; for afflictions are the work of evil spirits, but the attribution to evil spirits is expressed in certain outstanding cases of damage, particularly when the mind is afflicted. The designation of the spirits as "unclean" comes from Mark. Although the word usually means immorality associated with sexual experience, this is probably not meant here; the word appears to be synonymous with "evil." (JBC)

The list of the Twelve has the same names as Mark 3:16-19 with some changes. Peter is singled out as "first". The Twelve are arranged in pairs, with the two sets of brothers mentioned first; this may reflect Mark 6:7, in which the Twelve are sent out in pairs. To the name Matthew is added "the tax collector." The nickname of Boanerges for the sons of Zebedee is omitted. (JBC)

Matthew has previously spoken of Jesus' "disciples" in a general way, without distinguishing clearly between the general adherents and "special disciples," although 4:19 must refer to the latter. Now he mentions the "twelve" for the first time. The inner group was approximately of this number, although its personnel may have fluctuated somewhat. Mark 6:7 (= Luke 9:1) pictures Jesus as giving the power to cast out "unclean spirits", but Q does not (Luke 10:9). Similar lists are given in Mark 3:16-19, Luke 6:14-16, and Acts 1:13; the second-century Epistle of the Apostles has a very different list (chapter 2). John's Gospel gives no list of the twelve, and its most prominent disciples are not those of the Synoptics. (IB)

his twelve disciples -- this is the first mention of the group of learners by Matthew, and assumed as already in existence as they were (Mark 3:14). They were chosen before the Sermon on the Mount was delivered, but Matthew did not mention it in connection with that sermon. **gave them authority** -- gave them power. One may be surprised that here only the healing work is mentioned, although Luke (9:2) has "to preach the Kingdom of God, and to heal the sick." And Matthew says (10:7), "And as you go, preach." Therefore it is not fair to say that Matthew knows only the charge to

heal the sick, important as that is. The physical distress was great, but the spiritual was even greater. This healing ministry attracted attention and did a vast deal of good. Today we have hospitals and skilled physicians and nurses, but we should not deny the power of God to bless all these agencies and to cure disease as he wills. Jesus is still the master of soul and body. But intelligent faith does not justify us in abstaining from the help of the physician who must not be confounded with the quack and the charlatan. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 2:

Only here does Matthew use the word “apostles.” In the NT the term is applied not only to the twelve, but to various others -- Paul and Barnabas (Galatians 1:1; Acts 14:14), Matthias (Acts 1:26), James and the other brothers of the Lord (I Corinthians 9:5; Galatians 1:19), Andronicus and Junias (Romans 16:7). It designates those who are “sent with a commission” to proclaim salvation through Jesus. It is sometimes argued that all apostles had seen the risen Lord (I Corinthians 9:1; 15:7; Acts 1:22). The corresponding Hebrew word denotes one who is commissioned as an angel in legal matters by an individual or by a court, or who is entrusted with offering prayer. At a later time the Jewish patriarch often sent an apostle to collect funds or to root out heresy, and perhaps Paul’s work was analogous to this, both before and after his conversion. Matthew elsewhere prefers to speak of the twelve as disciples, since he thinks of the ideal Christian leader as a rabbi (cf. on 13:52; 16:19), but here he exhibits the view of late first-century Christianity, which is that the twelve were the first apostles. Such an idea dominates Luke-Acts, but is absent from Mark. “Simon” or Simeon is almost always thought of as “first” in rank among the twelve. His surname “Peter” translates his Aramaic nickname Cephas (“rock”), which we find in Galatians 1:18; I Corinthians 1:12; John 1:42, and elsewhere. Cf. 4:18-22. (IB)

The names of the twelve apostles -- this is the official name (missionaries) used here by Matthew for the first time. The names are given here, but Matthew does not say that they were chosen at this time. Mark (3:13-19) and Luke (6:12-16) state that Jesus “chose” them, “appointed” them after a night of prayer in the mountain and came down with them and then delivered the Sermon (Luke 6:17). Simon heads the list in all four lists including Acts 1:13f. He came to be first and foremost at the great Pentecost (Acts 2:1 and Acts 3:1). The apostles disputed a number of times as to which was the greatest. Judas Iscariot comes last each time except that he is absent in Acts, being already dead. Matthew calls him the betrayer. Iscariot is usually explained “Man of Kerioth” down near Edom (Joshua 15:25). Philip comes fifth and James, the son of Alphaeus, the ninth. Bartholomew is the name for Nathanael. Thaddaeus is Judas, the brother of James. Simon Zelotes is also called Simon, the Canaanite (Zealous, Hebrew word). This is apparently their first preaching and healing tour without Jesus. He sends them forth by twos (Mark 6:7). Matthew names them in pairs, probably as they were sent out. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 3:

“Philip,” like Andrew, is a Greek name. The bar in “Bartholomew” ought to mean “son of,” but the derivation of the rest of the name is uncertain. John 11:16; 20:24 translates “Thomas” as twin, and the name may be a Hellenized form of the Aramaic word for twin. “Matthew” appears in all lists of the twelve and is substituted for Levi in

9:9. "Alphaeus" is a Greek name, but attempts have been made to find Aramaic equivalents such as Clopas (John 19:25). "Thaddaeus" is the reading of Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and a few other good manuscripts and is adopted in some versions; while Codex Bezae (D) reads, "Labbaeus" here and in Mark 3:19. The text of some versions contain the two. Ecclesiastical tradition has identified this disciple with Judas son of James (Luke 6:16 Acts 1:13). This variety has led some scholars to ask whether the number of the disciples was always exactly twelve. (IB)

Verse 4:

Cananean -- Simon's appellative is not the gentile name of the pre-Israelite people of Palestine, but a Greek transcription of the Aram word, "Zealot," a member of the radical anti-Roman revolutionary party. Simon had no doubt abandoned this allegiance. (JBC)

The twelve are called "apostles" only here in Matthew. No appointment of the Twelve is related by Mark other than this: both Mark and Luke mention the election of the Twelve. (JBC)

"Simon the Cananean" was probably not a "Canaanite" as it is some versions. The word may be an Aramaic equivalent of the "Zealot" of Luke 6:15. Perhaps before his conversion Simon had been one of a band of anti-Roman revolutionaries (Josephus. Jewish Wars. IV. 3.9.), but there is no evidence for this. He may simply have been zealous for the law. The meaning of "Iscaiot" is a famous problem, and the usual explanation is "man of Kerioth," that is, a certain village. One scholar derives it from the Aramaic word meaning "the false." The phrase "who betrayed him" would thus mean almost the same thing. Cf. on 26:47-50. (IB)

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b. SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Matthew 5:1-2

11. Read Matthew 5:1-2 entirely through one time.
 - (1) No reference

Matthew 5:1-2

- 1 When he saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him.
- 2 He began to teach them, saying:

Overview from LToJC:

It was probably on one of those mountain ranges which stretch to the north of Capernaum that Jesus had spent the night of lonely prayer, which preceded the designation of the twelve to the Apostolate. As the soft spring morning broke, He called up those who had learned to follow Him, and from among them chose the twelve, who were to be His ambassadors and representatives. But already the early light had guided the eager multitude which, from all parts, had come to the broad level of the plateau beneath to bring to Him their need of body or soul. To them He now descended with

words of comfort and power of healing. As they pressed around Him for that touch which brought virtue of healing to all, He retired again to the mountain-height, and through the clear air of the bright spring day spoke what has ever since been known as the "Sermon on the Mount," from the place where He sat, or as that "in the plain (Luke 6:17), from the place where He had first met the multitude, and which so many must have continued to occupy while He taught.

Overview from IB:

Matthew now introduces the most striking and characteristic feature of his entire Gospel. He has sometimes been called "ecclesiastical," legalistic," or "Judaistic," but actually his greatest interest is in the moral life of the Christian community. This discourse, which is put at the forefront of his Gospel, deals with the righteousness which exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees (5:20), and is appropriate for those who pray for the kingdom of heaven and will inherit it. This righteousness is prophetic rather than rabbinical, and it is worth noting that the last of the five discourses concludes on the same exalted note of transcendent righteousness (25:31-46). Some of Matthew's special material (which is often assigned to an M source) has an inverted rabbinical interest; that is, it is directed against the law as understood by the Pharisees. But the passages which are drawn from the sermon as it is found also in Luke 6:10-49, and also from other parts of Q, deal with the right action in the widest sense of the word. The Sermon on the Mount is a whole new Torah or teaching tradition and not merely a new halakah or law- book.

Jesus would not have given all this teaching on a single occasion. The sermon is made up of clichés, maxims, and illustrations which were remembered and treasured out of many discourses.

Up to this point in Matthew's story Jesus has called only four special disciples, and apparently the discourse is addressed to them; but Matthew actually has in mind the crowds, and the sermon is intended to apply to all Christians.

It is a curious fact that both Matthew (4:24-25) and Luke (6:17-19) begin their sermons after a summary of healings, and in each case the summary is based on Mark 3:7-12. Possibly Q introduced the sermon in a similar fashion. In any event, the sermon, like the preaching of John the Baptist in 3:1-2 is addressed to a group of people who have come away from their homes to hear the word.

Verse 1:

the mountain -- Jesus is meant to be the new Moses proclaiming the new revelation on a new Mt. Sinai. Much of the sermon is paralleled in Luke, but the extensive discourse, which contains most of the parallels, is strangely given not on a mountain but in a plain (Luke 6:17). The preceding narrative has gathered the crowds (5:1) that hear the sermon. The discourse is introduced with unusual solemnity; Matthew means this to be the revelation of what he has called the proclamation of the reign or the good new of the reign. (JBC)

The preceding section prepares for the mention of "the crowds." "He went up on the mountain" -- as he did when he was transfigured (17:1) and when he gave his parting commandment (28:16), and as Moses did to receive the law (Exodus 19). Here and in 28:16 Matthew may have a particular mountain in mind. The mountain (or "hills") is mentioned also in Luke 6:12; Mark 3:13. "He sat down" -- this was the appropriate

posture for a Jewish teacher, and especially fitting for so important a discourse. (IB)

“He went up into the mountain” -- we do not know what mountain it was. It was the one where Jesus and the crowds were. A scholar has called the Mount of Beatitudes as “the Sinai of the NT.” He apparently went up to get in closer contact with the disciples, “seeing the multitudes.” Luke (6:12) says that he went out into the mountain to pray, Mark (3:13) that he went up and called the twelve. All three purposes are true. Luke adds that after a whole night in prayer and after the choice of the twelve Jesus came down to a level place on the mountain and spoke to the multitudes from Judea to Phoenicia. The crowds are great in both Matthew and Luke and include disciples and the other people. There is no real difficulty in considering the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew and the Sermon on the Plain in Luke as one and the same. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 2:

“Taught them” -- began to teach. He sat down on the mountain side as the Jewish Rabbis did instead of standing. It was a most impressive scene as Jesus opened his mouth wide and spoke loud enough for the great throng to hear him. The newly chosen twelve apostles were there, “a great number of disciples and a great number of the people (Luke 6:17). (INT--Robinson)

* * * * *

(1) THE BEATITUDES

Matthew 5:3-12

Luke 6:20-26

- | | | |
|-----|--|---------------------|
| 12. | Read Matthew 5:3-12 entirely through one time. | |
| (1) | Luke 6:20-23 | |
| 13. | Read Matthew 5:3 | |
| (1) | Luke 6:20-23 | |
| 14. | Read Matthew 5:4 | |
| (1) | Isaiah 61:2-3 | (2) Revelation 21:4 |
| 15. | Read Matthew 5:5 | |
| (1) | Genesis 13:15 | (2) Psalm 37:11 |
| 16. | Read Matthew 5:6 | |
| (1) | No reference | |
| 17. | Read Matthew 5:7 | |
| (1) | Matthew 18:33 | (2) James 2:13 |
| 18. | Read Matthew 5:8 | |
| (1) | Psalm 24:4-5 | (2) Psalm 73:1 |

19. Read Matthew 5:9
(1) No reference
20. Read Matthew 5:10
(1) I Peter 2:20 (3) I Peter 4:14
(2) I Peter 3:14
21. Read Matthew 5:11
(1) Matthew 10:22 (2) Acts 5:41
22. Read Matthew 5:12
(1) II Chronicles 36:16 (3) James 5:10
(2) Hebrews 11:32-38

Matthew 5:3-12

- 3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 4 Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.
- 5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.
- 6 Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.
- 7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
- 8 Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.
- 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
- 10 Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 11 Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you (falsely) because of me.
- 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Overview from IB:

The beatitudes are all promises of the kingdom of God, for to be in the kingdom is to “be comforted,” to “inherit the earth,” or the promised land, to “be satisfied,” to “obtain mercy,” to “see God,” and to be called his “sons.” They are also descriptions of those who receive the promises. Such people cleave to God in simple trust, are single-minded in their love for him, and, although they are oppressed by the world, are merciful to others, and wherever they go, are the bringers and founders of peace. Jesus clearly expects his teaching to be put into practice. It is not a formless ethical deed; and, although Paul and John are able to sum it up in the word “love,” the Sermon on the Mount is concrete and specific. Yet the beatitudes show that for Jesus righteousness is more than the sum of his commandments; it is a total attitude of mind, a particular kind of character. Those who are praised in the Gospel are men and women of humility, love, trust, fidelity, and courage. They are not yet perfect, but they are converted. Their interests and desires are turned in the direction of the kingdom of God.

Matthew apparently has nine beatitudes, although the eighth and ninth may constitute but one; and if verse 5 is removed there may be only seven. Luke 6:20-23

contains four beatitudes, all of which have parallels here. Q probably had these, and in the third person rather than the second, as in Luke; Matthew, however, added such phrases as “in spirit” (verse 3) and “righteousness” (verse 6). Were there also beatitudes in sources L and M? If so Luke’s four woes (6:24-26) may be from L, and at least some of Matthew’s beatitudes may come from M.

As they stand, Matthew’s beatitudes are no mere patchwork. When such glosses as “in spirit” are removed, they are in poetic form. Some scholars believe that the underlying Aramaic had both rhythm and rhyme. The eighth beatitude artistically repeats the phrase “kingdom of the heavens.” Even the long ninth beatitude may be in accordance with the conventional forms of Jewish poetry.

Verse 3:

Blessed are -- Or “happy is the one...” This formula is common in Psalm and in OT wisdom literature; it also appears elsewhere in other NT books, and in particular in Revelation. The beatitudes as such are not attributed to Q; Luke 6:21-24 has four beatitudes and four woes. Luke’s beatitudes are parallel to Matthew’s first, second, fourth, and the expansion of the eighth. The woes of Luke are antithetic of the beatitudes. The beatitudes of Matthew are “spiritualized” in comparison to those of Luke, emphasizing the quality of virtue and the activity of virtue. Luke speaks of poverty, hunger, and mourning. (JBC)

poor in spirit -- The difference between Luke’s “poor” and Matthew’s “poor in spirit” is not substantial; Matthew certainly does not mean those who, although they are wealthy, are spiritually detached from their wealth. The phrase probably echoes Isaiah 61:1 (see Luke 4:18). Both phrases designate the poor class, which constituted the vast majority of the population of the Hellenistic-Roman world. In later OT literature and in the literature of Judaism the name of this class is “anawim”. The name of “aniyyim” became almost a technical term for the devout and observant Jews. Often these two names became confused because of their similarity in spelling. Matthew’s “poor in spirit” emphasizes less the literal lack of possessions than the lowly condition of the poor; their poverty did not allow them the arrogance and assertiveness of the wealthy but imposed habitual and servile deference. The term is very close to “meek” in the third beatitude. Their reward is the “kingdom of heaven”; in this context “kingdom” rather than “reign” is meant. (JBC)

The Greek word rendered “blessed” is used in pagan literature to denote the highest stage of happiness and well-being, such as the gods enjoy. Here it stands for the Hebrew phrase which means “how happy!” as in Psalms 1:1; 32:1; 112:1. It is often used as a congratulatory salutation as in Luke 1:42; 11:27-28. The beatitudes state who are happy in God’s sight. The poor, the Hebrew “aniyyim” [but see above in JBC], primarily denotes their state of poverty, but they are the despised, oppressed, and pious poor of Psalms 9:18; 10:9; 12:5; 34:6; James 1:9; 2:5-6, who look to God for their vindication and for whom God cares. They are not merely miserable in body; they are afflicted “in spirit” (cf. Isaiah 11:1) and “feel their spiritual need.” The phrase “in spirit”, added by Matthew, is an accurate and happy gloss. “Theirs is the kingdom” -- Jesus may be thinking of the age to come, but in prophecy present and future are never clearly distinguished. (IB)

“Blessed” means to speak well of. The Greek word here is an adjective that

means “happy” which in English etymology goes back to hap, change, good-luck as seen in our words haply, hapless, happily, happiness. Blessedness is, of course, an infinitely higher and better thing than mere happiness. English has thus ennobled “blessed” to a higher rank than “happy.” But “happy” is what Jesus said. The Greek word is as old as Homer and was used of the Greek gods and also of men, but largely of outward prosperity. Then it is applied to the dead in the Lord as in Revelation 14:13. Already in the OT the LXX uses it of moral quality. Shaking itself loose from all thoughts of outward good, it becomes the express symbol of a happiness identified with pure character. Behind it lies the clear cognition of sin as the fountain-head of all misery, and of holiness as the final and effectual cure for every woe. For knowledge as the basis of virtue, and therefore of happiness, it substitutes faith and love. Jesus takes this word “happy” and puts it in this rich environment. This is one of the words which have been transformed and ennobled by NT use; by association, as in the beatitudes, with unusual conditions, accounted by the world miserable, or with rare and difficult. It is a pity that we have not kept the word “happy” to the high and holy plane where Jesus placed it. “If you know these things, happy are you if you do them” (John 13:17). “Happy are those who have seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29). And Paul applies this adjective to God, “according to the gospel of the glory of the happy God” (I Timothy 1:11; cf. also Titus 2:13). The term “beatitudes” comes close to the meaning of Christ here. It will repay one to make a careful study of all the “beatitudes” in the NT where this word is used. It occurs nine times here (Titus 3-11), although the beatitudes in verses 10 and 11 are very much alike. The verb (link) between subject and predicate (copula) is not expressed in either of these nine beatitudes. In each case a reason is given for the beatitude, it shows the spiritual quality involved. Some of the phrases used by Jesus here occur in the Psalms, some even in the Talmud (itself later than the NT, although of separate origin). This is of small account. The originality of Jesus lies in putting the due value on these thoughts, collecting them, and making them as prominent as the Ten Commandments. No greater service can be rendered to mankind than to rescue from obscurity neglected moral commonplaces. Jesus repeated his sayings many times as all great preachers and teachers do, but this sermon has unity, progress, and consummation. It does not contain all that Jesus taught by any means, but it stands out as the greatest single sermon of all time, in its penetration, sharpness, and power. (INT--Robinson)

“The poor in spirit” -- Luke has only “the poor,” but he means the same by it as this form in Matthew, the pious in Israel, for the most part poor, whom the worldly rich despised and persecuted. The word used here is applied to the beggar Lazarus in Luke 16:20, 22 and suggests spiritual destitution. The other similar word means to work for one’s daily bread and so means one who works for his living. “The kingdom of heaven” here means the reign of God in the heart and life. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 4:

those who mourn -- if verse 3 echoes Isaiah 61:1, this verse very probably echoes Isaiah 61:2; to console the mourners is one of the functions of the messenger who speaks in this passage of Isaiah. More probably it means those who mourn the evils of Israel, which are due to its sins. Their consolation will be the experience of the Messianic salvation. (JBC)

They “mourn,” perhaps for their own sins and those of Israel, but also because the

wickedness of the world oppressed their spirits. "They shall be comforted" by God. In Isaiah 61:2 and Luke 2:25 the "consolation of Israel" means the coming age of bliss. Some rabbis gave the name "Comforter" to the Messiah. (IB)

"they that mourn" -- is another paradox. This verb is most frequent in the LXX for mourning for the dead, and for the sorrows and sins of others. There can be no comfort where there is no grief. Sorrow should make us look for the heart and hand of God and so find the comfort latent in grief. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 5:

the meek -- These are the same class as that designated in verse 3, the lowly who are unable to be aggressive. The ideal of meekness is described concretely in verses 39-42. (JBC)

the land -- The meek shall possess the eschatological land of Israel, restored by the saving deeds of God. The phrase echoes the promise of the land to the OT patriarchs. (JBC)

Some early manuscripts transpose verses 4 and 5, perhaps in order to bring the "poor" and "meek" together; however, verse 5 may be an early gloss based on Psalm 35:11, in which case its place in the text might vary. "Meek" means humble-minded rather than gentle. It represents the "meek" of Psalm 37:11, who are "the poor" looked at from the different point of view. "They will inherit" the (promised) land or perhaps the restored "earth" of the messianic age. The English word "meek" now has unfortunate associations, but that was not always true: Moses was "very meek, above all men" (Numbers 12:3). (IB)

"The meek" -- the ancients used the word for outward conduct and towards men. They did not rank it as virtue anyhow. It was a mild equanimity that was sometimes negative and sometimes positively kind. But Jesus lifted the word to a nobility never attained before. In fact, the beatitudes assume a new heart, for the natural man does not find in happiness the qualities mentioned here by Jesus. The English word "meek" has largely lost the fine blend of spiritual poise and strength meant by the Master. He calls himself "meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29) and Moses is also called meek. It is the gentleness of strength, not mere effeminacy. By "the earth" Jesus seems to mean the land of promise (Psalm 37:11) although some think that it is the whole earth. Can it be the solid earth as opposed to the sea or the air? (INT--Robinson)

Verse 6:

who hunger and thirst for righteousness -- The "righteousness" after which one should hunger and thirst is a word of broad meaning. In Matthew it most frequently designates the condition of good relations with God--achieved by submission to his will. In Pharisaic Judaism this condition was thought to be assured by the observance of the Law according to Pharisaic standards. Jesus insists that his disciples must strive for something higher than this (5:20). "Righteousness" can also echo the OT idea of the victory of God over his enemies, his vindication of himself and of Israel. The reward is to obtain what is desired. (JBC)

Q probably read: "Blessed are those who hunger, because they shall be filled." With the word "righteousness" added, the meaning may be: (1) they desire righteousness in the sense of vindication (Isaiah 62:2; cf. Luke 18:7); (2) they strive to be upright (Proverbs 21:21); (3) they depend not upon their own power to achieve righteousness, but

upon God. The third interpretation cannot be reconciled with rabbinical Judaism; the closest parallel is Luke 18:10-14. But taking the sermon as a whole, we are probably right in choosing this meaning: one can only "hunger and thirst" for the righteousness required; its demands cannot be met by a frontal attack or sheer will power. "Shall be filled" need not necessarily refer to physical eating; in the Greek text of Psalm 16 (17):15 and in Tobit 12:9 the expression is used figuratively. (IB)

"They that hunger and thirst after righteousness" -- here Jesus turns one of the elemental human instincts to spiritual use. There is in all men hunger for food, for love, for God. It is passionate hunger and thirst for goodness, for holiness. (INT--Robinson)
Verse 7:

the merciful -- The ideal of mercy or compassion is a frequent theme in all the Gospels. The beatitude is illustrated by the parable of the merciless servant (Matthew 18:23-35). The two works of mercy most emphasized in Matthew are almsgiving and forgiveness. The reward of compassion is to receive compassion. (JBC)

"The merciful" are those who behave toward the unfortunate with sympathetic loving kindness, as witness the Samaritan of Luke 10:37. See also Matthew 17:15, and 6:14-15; 7:1-2. (IB)

Verse 8:

the pure of heart -- Purity of heart is opposed to the external Levitical purity achieved by ritual ablution; this is a frequent object of contention between Jesus and the Pharisees. What is meant by purity of heart is explained in 15:10-20. It is manifested principally by speech, which betrays one's thoughts and desires. The reward of purity of heart is to see God. This does not signify what in theology is called "the beatific vision," but admission to the presence of God (see 18:10). In OT language the members of the royal court are those "who see the face of the King." (JBC)

"the pure in heart" need not be thought of as the morally perfect; and there is no special reference to sexual purity. "Heart" in Semitic speech includes the mind as well as the emotions. The pure-hearted man of Psalm 24:4 has had no desire for falsehood, and has not sworn to a lie. A rabbinical commentary interprets "such as are of a clean heart" (Psalm 73:1) as meaning those whose heart is strong through fulfilling the law. The phrase almost means "those who are right with God, "those who with singleness of mind (Colossians 3:22) try to do God's will" (cf. also James 4:8). Such people will "see God", not merely in the metaphorical sense of worshipping in his house (Psalm 42:2), nor in a purely mystical sense, but rather in the sense that God will reward them by permitting them to see him face to face in the age to come (Revelation 22:4). This beatitude of Jesus is distinctive and we know of no rabbinical saying like it. (IB)

"shall see God" -- without holiness no man will see the Lord in heaven (Hebrews 12:14). The beatific vision is only possible here on earth to those with pure hearts. No other can see the King now. Sin befoes and beclouds the heart so that one cannot see God. Purity has here its widest sense and includes everything. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 9:

the peacemakers -- This word does not represent the Hebrew phrase, "who who produces prosperity," but means those who reconcile quarrels. Reconciliation is a Christian office often recommended in the Gospels; see 5:23-26. The reward is to be called sons of God. This is a title of Israel in the OT; those who reconcile quarrels are

genuine Israelites. (JBC)

The “peacemakers” are those who “seek peace, and pursue it” (Psalm 34:14). “Peace” in the OT means more than just the absence of strife; it is personal and social well-being in the widest sense of the word. Jesus’ disciples will bring into all their relationships a quality which makes for harmony and blessing. Monarchs like Augustus were praised as “peacemakers”; but the peace known to the Bible springs from trust, love, and obedience toward God. The rabbis put the same high valuation on peacemakers. Hillel who was Jesus’ contemporary, said: “Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace.” Such persons will “be called sons of God.” In the OT the phrase “sons of God” occasionally refers to angels or divine beings (Job 38:7), but it most often means the Hebrews, whom God created (Deuteronomy 32:6), who are the objects of God’s love and care and are under obligation to obey him. For example, Hosea 1:10 promises that the repentant Israelites, who have not been God’s people, will be called “sons of the living God” (see on 4:3). Verses 44-45 furnish the best possible comment on this verse. Those who seek peace by loving their enemies are doing as God himself does, and are his true sons in every way. (IB)

“the peacemakers” -- not merely peaceable men but those who make up over strife. It is hard enough to keep the peace. It is still more difficult to bring peace where it is not. The perfect peacemaker is the Son of God (Ephesians 2:14). (INT--Robinson)

Verse 10:

“that have been persecuted for righteousness’ sake” -- posing as persecuted is a favorite stunt. The kingdom of heaven belongs only to those who suffer for the sake of goodness, not who are guilty of wrong. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 10-11:

“For righteousness’ sake” appears to be more primitive than “on my account” or “on account of the Son of man” (Luke 6:22), and it fits well with verses 3-4. Codex Bezae (D) and some OL manuscripts read “righteousness” in verse 11 also. “On my account” raises the whole question whether Jesus demanded that his disciples confess him before men (10:32-33); but whether he did or not, it was still true that faithful adherence to Jesus’ understanding of the Law might bring scorn and persecution, and in a sense this would be on his “account.” The Bible almost everywhere assumes that God’s servants must remain true even at the risk of their lives. The rabbis later ruled that a man might, if his life were in danger, break any commandments except those against idolatry, unchastity, and murder. Yet they also taught that martyrs were rewarded in the world to come. “Falsely” is probably an unnecessary gloss; some Western authorities and the Sinaitic Syriac omit it, as does Luke. (IB)

Verse 11:

“falsely, for my sake” -- what does matter is that the bad things said of Jesus’ followers shall be untrue and that they are slandered for Jesus’ sake. Both things must be true before one can wear a martyr’s crown and receive the great reward in heaven. No prize awaits one there who deserves all the evil said of him and done to him here. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 10-12:

In spite of the repetition of “blessed” in 5:11, the number of beatitudes is eight, not nine; the beatitude is expanded in 5:11-12. Persecution for righteousness is

persecution that is endured in order to maintain good relations with God by obedience to his will. The expansion identifies Jesus with righteousness. He replaces the Law as the one and the sure means by which one maintains good relations with God. This relationship will certainly bring persecution (described in terms of the experience of the primitive church), but the reward is greater than any reward promised before. The Church is the successor of the prophets, who were persecuted by their own people.; the persecution mentioned is probably the attacks made on the Christian community by the Jews. (JBC)

Verse 12:

“Your reward is great in heaven”--this does not necessarily mean that reward is confined to heaven. It is enjoyed in heaven as well as on earth, and it is laid up for man in heaven (6:20) and thus guaranteed by a faithful God. The rabbis recognized that to do a good deed “for its own sake” or “for love,” was to do it with a higher motive than that of reward; but neither Jesus nor the rabbis hesitated to speak of reward, since God had promised it. Highly organized religious systems often succumb to the temptation to make reward in heaven a matter of bookkeeping, but Jesus avoids this danger because he teaches: (1) that God’s reward cannot be measured, for it consists of salvation in the age to come, and it is identical for all (20:1-16; 25:21, 23); (2) that it is out of all proportion to the service rendered (19:29; 25:21, 23); and (3) that, in the last analysis, it is a gracious gift, for “when you have done all that is prescribed for you, say, ‘We are mere slaves; we have only done what we ought’” (Luke 17:10). The OT tells how “prophets” like Amos and Jeremiah were “persecuted.” In the first century it was also believed that Isaiah had been martyred by being sawed in two. (see Hebrews 11:37) (IB)

Summary from JBC:

It is difficult for us to appreciate the paradoxical character of the beatitudes. They institute a moral revolution that has not yet reached its fullness. They are opposed to all the conventional values of the Jewish and the Hellenistic-Roman world and pronounce blessings on those who do not share in these values. Not only the external values of wealth and status are repudiated but also those goods of the persons that are achieved and defended by self-assertion and strife. The general statement of the beatitudes are enlarged by concrete examples in the following passages of the sermon. (JBC)

Summary from LToJC:

The essential difference between what Jesus said and what was preserved in rabbinic writings is in its spirit and substance, not only when viewed as a whole, but in almost each of its individual parts. The nameless feeling that must have stolen over the receptive soul, when in the silence of the soul’s moral wilderness, the voice of Jesus first broke on its ear,--that soul that had never been awakened before. Words not of judgment, but rather of mercy, not concerning an irrevocable and impossible past, but concerning a real and possible future, which is that past, and only better, nearer, dearer-- for that is not the human which has now to rise to the Divine, but the Divine which has come down to the human.

Turn from this to the first reading of the wisdom of the Jewish fathers in their Talmud. It little matters what part is chosen for the purpose. Here, the reader is at a disadvantage, since his instructors present to him too frequently broken sentences, extracts that are torn from their connections, or misapplied as regards their bearing and

spirit; at best, they are only isolated sentences. Taken as a whole, it is not only utterly unspiritual, but anti-spiritual. The Talmud always bears in mind the particular standpoint of narrow nationalism, without which Talmudism itself could not have existed, and which is an essential part of it.

The new teaching of Jesus, to be historically true, must have employed the old forms and spoken the old language. But the ideas underlying terms equally employed by Jesus and the teachers of Israel are, in everything that concerns the relations of souls to God, so absolutely different as not to bear comparison. He who has thirsted and quenched his thirst at the living fountain of Jesus' teaching, can never again stoop to seek drink at the broken cistern of rabbinism.

There is no doubt that Luke's account and Matthew's are parallels. It is not easy, nor even possible, to determine whether or not all that is grouped in the "Sermon on the Mount" was really spoken by Jesus on this one occasion. The presumption seems rather to the contrary from the plan and structure of the Gospel of Matthew. The Sermon on the Mount seems to correspond to the Divine Revelation in the "Ten Words" from Mount Sinai.

Viewing it in the light of the time, we might mark in it advancement of the OT (or rather, the unfolding of its inmost, yet hidden meaning) and contrast it with contemporary Jewish teaching. We would regard it as the inward and outward manifestation of discipleship. Contrasting it with Jewish teaching we can observe these differences: (1) Right relationship between man and God, or true righteousness--what inward grace characterize and what prospects attach to it, in opposition to Jewish views of merit and reward. (2) the same contrast can be made with sin, and temptation. (3) regarding salvation, and (4) regarding what may be termed moral theology; personal feelings, married and other relations, discipleship, and the like. In this great contrast two points would prominently stand out: (1) NT humility, as opposed to Jewish humility (Jewish humility being really only pride, while NT humility is really despair of self), and (2) Jewish as opposed to NT perfectness (Jewish perfection was an attempt by means of external or internal to strive upwards to God; the NT perfection is a new life, springing from God, and in God--an upward teaching in regard to God).

Jesus came to found a Kingdom, not a school; to institute a fellowship, not to propound a system. To the first disciples all doctrinal teaching sprang out of fellowship with him. They saw him, and therefore believed; they believed, and therefore learned the truths connected with him, and springing out of him.

Just as the Sermon on the Mount differs from all contemporary Jewish teaching, the same is true when we compare it with any other system of morality. The difference here is one of degree, nor even of kind, but rather it is one of standpoint. The words of Jesus, properly understood, marks the utmost limits of all possible moral conception. Every moral system is a road by which, through self-denial, discipline, and effort, men seek to reach the goal. Jesus begins with this goal, and places His disciples at once in the position to which all other teachers, point as the end. They work up to the goal of becoming the "children of the Kingdom"; he makes men such, freely, and of his grace: and this is the kingdom. What the others labor for, he gives. They begin by demanding, he by bestowing; because he brings good tidings of forgiveness and mercy. In the real sense, there is neither new law nor moral system here--but rather entrance into a new life.

In each case Jesus Himself (because he stands between our present and our future) has opened the kingdom to heaven to all believers. The promise represents the gift of grace by Christ in the New Kingdom, as adapted to each case.

In the first part of the Sermon, the kingdom of God is delineated generally, first positively then negatively, marking especially how its righteousness goes deeper than the mere letter of even the OT law. It opens with these ten beatitudes, which are the NT counterpart to the Ten Commandments. These present to us, not the observance of the Law written on stone, but the realization of that Law which, by the Spirit, is written on the fleshly tablets of our hearts.

* * * * *

23. Read Luke 6:20-26 entirely through one time.

(1) Matthew 5:1-12

24. Read Luke 6:20

(1) No reference

25. Read Luke 6:21

(1) Psalm 126:5-6

(3) Jeremiah 31:25

(2) Isaiah 61:3

(4) Revelation 7:16-17

26. Read Luke 6:22

(1) John 15:19

(3) I Peter 4:14

(2) John 16:2

27. Read Luke 6:23

(1) II Chronicles 36:16

(3) Luke 11:47-48

(2) Matthew 23:30-31

28. Read Luke 6:24

(1) James 5:1

29. Read Luke 6:25

(1) Isaiah 65:13-14

30. Read Luke 6:26

(1) James 4:4

Luke 6:20-26

20 And raising his eyes toward his disciples he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours.

21 Blessed are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh.

22 Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude and insult you, and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man.

23 Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in heaven.

- For their ancestors treated the prophets in the same way.
- 24 But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.
- 25 But woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will grieve and weep.
- 26 Woe to you when all speak well of you, for their ancestors treated the false prophets in this way.

Overview from JBC:

Luke's orderly account of the Galilean ministry (4:14 - 9:50) began with two typical events: one at Nazareth, highlighting the rejection of Jesus by his own townspeople (4:14-30); the other at Capernaum, symbolizing the enthusiastic reception of him by outsiders (Gentiles) in a town where he had not grown up (4:31-33). Luke then proceeded to add other important details in the story of the establishment of the kingdom (5:1 - 6:16), especially that of the naming of the Twelve and the controversies with various hostile groups. The stage is now set for a presentation of the full Galilean ministry.

Although Luke's Great Discourse (6:17-49) corresponds in many ways to Matthew's Sermon on the Mount (5 - 7), there are many important differences. What Jesus originally said in a kerygmatic discourse, promising divine mercy to well-intentioned persons who look to God for salvation, was first of all preserved in an Aram document. Matthew and Luke adapt this material, each to his own purpose, or else each depends upon two different Greek translations of the Aram original. Matthew has 107 verses: Luke 30 or 32. Much of Matthew's excess material will reappear in Luke's Journey Narrative (9:51 - 18:14): Luke 6:38a, 39, 40, 45 are absent from Matthew's Sermon on the Mount but show up elsewhere in Matthew. As regards the audience, Matthew portrays Jesus drawing a select group of disciples up on the mountain, so that he might instruct them to be leaders in the kingdom; Luke pictures Jesus' coming down from the mountain and meeting a large group of disciples, of poor, and of disabled. In Luke, Jesus is always conscious of his audience, "you poor," whereas in Matthew, he speaks more objectively about "the poor." Matthew has preserved a catechetical discourse of the early church, pointing out that law in some way still remains in force for Christians; Luke reflects the eschatological urgency of Jesus' original words. Luke has also rewritten Jesus' words, widening their scope to include Gentiles, underlining the social point of view, and strengthening the sacrificial demands of charity.

The beatitudes in Luke are to be found in 6:20-23. While Matthew has nine beatitudes and no woes, Luke has four of each. Luke, not only rearranges the sequence of the beatitudes from Matthew's first, fourth, second, and last; but the woes follow the reverse pattern of the beatitudes. Such stylistic patterns are typical of Luke's Gospel. To the blessedness of the poor, the hungry, the weeping, and the persecuted there corresponds the sadness of the popular, the happy, the full, and the rich.

Overview from IB: from verses 6:17-19:

After a night of prayer in the hills, Jesus had summoned his disciples and chosen an inner circle. Then "he came down with them and stood on a level place." "The sea" is the setting in Mark, and "the mountain" in Matthew 5:1. Surrounded by the twelve, the larger company of his followers, and "a multitude of people" representative of the entire

nation, he healed the sick and then “lifted up his eyes on his disciples” and spoke to them.

It is clear that some common source underlies Luke’s “Sermon on the Plain” (6:20b-49) and Matthew’s “Sermon on the Mount” (Matthew 5:3 - 7:27). Both discourses begin with beatitudes. Both have sections, in the same relative order, on love for one’s enemies and on passing judgment. Both have the parable of the healthy and the diseased trees. And both end with the parable of the two houses. Only three of the thirty verses in Luke’s sermon (6:39, 40, 45a, 45b) appear in other contexts in Matthew, and only six and one half are missing altogether (6:24-26, 27b, 28a, 34, 35a, 37b, 38a). On the other hand, of the much longer sermon in Matthew (107 verses), one quarter (27 verses) is paralleled in Lukan contexts, and the larger part (43 verses) is peculiar to Matthew’s Gospel. The most probable solution of the literary problem involved is that Luke took over the sermon much as it stood in Q, and that Matthew expanded it. Luke’s sermon consists of (1) introductory blessings and woes (verses 20-26); (2) ethical legislation (verses 27-45); and (3) concluding parable (verses 46-49). In the central section of the Sermon on the Mount Matthew stresses the superiority of the new righteousness to the teaching of the scribes (Matthew 5:17-48) and to the practice of the Pharisees (Matthew 6:1-18), but no Jewish foils are used for the legislation in Luke. Although Luke presupposes a crowd of auditors in the background (7:1), Jesus’ words were directed in the first instance to his disciples--the larger company referred to in 6:13, 17.

The beatitudes in Luke are four in number, are addressed in the second person to the disciples, and emphasize the reversal of values that will take place in the age to come, whereas Matthew’s are nine, refer -- except in the last instance -- to the faithful in general, and stress the spiritual and moral qualities that characterize those who will enter the kingdom of heaven. Luke’s version looks the more primitive.

Verse 20:

raising his eyes -- an action recorded of Jesus on especially solemn occasions (16:23; 18:13; John 4:35; 6:5; 17:1). (JBC)

Blessed -- How happy; how blessed. It is a form of congratulations or joyful outburst: “how fortunate is such a man ...” It is different from the liturgical expression of blessing, praise, or thanksgiving. (JBC)

you poor -- the second person is certainly more direct, but the third person of Matthew’s Gospel is much more common in the OT; it is difficult to decide what grammatical form was used by Jesus in his address. There is a peculiar Semitic flavor in the Greek construction, using the nominative with article in place of the vocative--perhaps, an echo of Jesus’ own voice. (JBC)

poor -- In the LXX this word translates a Hebrew word, meaning the lowly ones who depend desperately upon Yahweh for help (Zechariah 2:3; 3:12). While Matthew writes of the “poor in spirit ... who hunger for justice,” Luke writes more simply of “you poor ... who hunger now ... weep now.” Luke makes great demands and expects strong simplicity in following Jesus. (JBC)

There may be a reminiscence of this beatitude in James 2:5. It has often been pointed out that the Hebrew word for “poor” had come in late Judaism (Psalms 9:12; 35:10) to mean “saintly” or “pious”, and that Jesus may have used an Aramaic original of our Greek in some such sense. This interpretation has the doubtful merit of harmonizing

Luke's first beatitude with Matthew's but the antithesis in verse 24 shows that Luke had in mind those who were "poor" in money and possessions. Jesus elsewhere asserts that riches constitute an almost insuperable barrier to "the kingdom of God" (18:24-25; Mark 10:23, 25). (IB)

"and he lifted up his eyes" -- Jesus looked the vast audience full in the face. Matthew 5:2 mentions that "he opened his mouth and taught them" (began to teach them). He spoke out so that the great crowd could hear. It is useless to speculate why Luke gives only four of the eight beatitudes in Matthew, or why Matthew does not give the four woes in Luke. One can only say that neither professes to give a complete report of the sermon. There is no evidence to show that either saw the report of the other. They may have used a common source like Q (the Logia of Jesus) or they may have had separate sources. Luke's first beatitude corresponds with Matthew's first but he does not have "in spirit" after poor. Does Luke represent Jesus as saying that poverty itself is a blessing? Or does Luke represent Jesus as meaning what is in Matthew, poverty of spirit? (INT--Robinson)

"The kingdom of God" -- Matthew 5:3 has "the kingdom of heaven" which occurs alone in Matthew although he also has the one here in Luke with no practical differences. The rabbis usually said "the kingdom of heaven". They used it of the political messianic kingdom when Judaism of the Pharisaic sort would triumph over the world. The idea of Jesus is in the sharpest contrast to that conception here and always. Kingdom is the favorite word of Jesus for the rule of God in the heart here and now. It is both present and future and will reach a glorious consummation. Some of the sayings of Jesus have apocalyptic and eschatological figures, but the heart of the matter is here in the spiritual reality of the reign of God in the hearts of those who serve him. The kingdom parables expand and enlarge upon various phases of this inward life and growth. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 21:

hunger now -- The word "now" is Luke's own addition; cf. Amos 8:11f. and the famine from the word of God; also Deuteronomy 8:3; Luke 4:4. Hunger and thirst are often messianic terms: Isaiah 49:10; 55:1; 65:13; John 6:35; Revelation 7:16. (JBC)

Luke's second and third beatitudes have also been "spiritualized" in Matthew's version. For "hunger now" there is "hunger and thirst for righteousness," and for "weep now" and "laugh," "mourn:" and "be comforted." (IB)

"Now" -- Luke adds this adverb here and in the next sentence after "weep." This sharpens the contrast between present sufferings and future blessings. "Filled" -- The same verb in Matthew 5:6. Originally it was used for giving fodder to animals, but here it is spiritual fodder or food except in Luke 15:16; 16:21. Luke here omits "and thirst after righteousness." "Weep" -- audible weeping. Where Matthew 5:4 has "mourn." "Shall laugh"--here Matthew 5:4 has "shall be comforted." Luke's words are terse. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 22:

In Matthew (5:19) the Greek of this saying is somewhat awkward stylistically (even though his version may be more original). Luke has recast the saying to emphasize that every follower of Jesus must share the Son of Man's rejection. Daniel 7:13f., 18 understands "Son of Man" in a corporate sense of the persecuted saints in the climactic

moment of messianic trial. Jesus used the term “Son of Man” when speaking of himself in the passion prophecies and Luke immediately added the requirements of suffering in the followers of Jesus (9:22-27). (JBC)

“When they shall separate you” -- common word for marking off a boundary. So either in good sense or bad sense here. The reference is to excommunication from the congregation as well as from social intercourse. “cast out your name as evil” -- the verb is used in Aristophanes, Sophocles, and Plato of hissing an actor off the stage. The name of Christian or disciple or Nazarene came to be a byword of contempt as shown in the Acts. It was even lawful in the Neronian persecution when Christianity was not a legitimate religion. “For the Son of Man’s sake” -- Jesus foretold what will befall those who are loyal to him. The Acts of the Apostles is a commentary on this prophecy. This is Christ’s common designation of himself, never of others save by Stephen (Acts 7:56) and in the Apocalypse (Revelation 1:13; 14:14). But both Son of God and Son of man apply to him (John 1:50-51; Matthew 26:63). Christ was a real man though the Son of God. He is also the representative man and has authority over all men. (INT-- Robinson) Verse 23:

on that day -- A messianic term, launched in biblical literature by Amos (2:16; 5:18) and given a firm place by Isaiah (2:11; 3:18; 4:2; 7:20). (JBC)

reward in heaven -- The reward that will be enjoyed on this earth already exists with God. (JBC)

“Leap for joy” -- an old verb and in LXX, but only in Luke in the NT (here and Matthew 1:41, 44). It answers to Matthew’s (5:12) “be exceeding glad.” “Did” -- the habit of their fathers.” Matthew 5:12 has “persecuted.” Thus they will receive a prophet’s reward (Matthew 10:41). (INT--Robinson)

Verse 24:

you have your comfort -- Luke uses a technical term for someone who has undertaken a debt. Woe or bankruptcy upon each man who does not acknowledge that he woe every comfort to Jesus. (JBC)

Verses 23-24:

“Exclude you”; that is, from the synagogue. “Cast out your name as evil” is probably a Semitism meaning “issue an evil report about you” (cf. James 2:7; I Peter 4:14). This beatitude may not have been original with Jesus. Its references are hatred, excommunication, reproach, and slander appear to imply forms of persecution experienced by the early church, and their fathers is a phrase that reflects a sense of alienation from the Jewish community. (IB)

Verse 24:

“but woe unto you that are rich” -- as a matter of fact the rich Pharisees and Sadducees were the chief opposers of Jesus as of the early disciples later (James 5:1-6). “ye have received” -- receipt in full. “consolation” -- to call to one’s side, to encourage, to help, to cheer.” (INT--Robinson)

Verses 24-26:

The woes have no parallel in Matthew and are exact antitheses to the preceding beatitudes. Men who find complete satisfaction in this world’s goods will be excluded from God’s kingdom. People who are content to satisfy only their physical needs in the present age will experience a time when God will send “a famine in the land, not a famine

of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord” (Amos 8:11). Concentration on the pleasures of this life will lead to deep distress when the new age dawns: “My servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit” (Isaiah 65:14). Flattery in ancient times was the reward of “false prophets”, and universal acclaim should therefore lull no man into a sense of complacency. (IB)

Verse 25:

“Now” -- here twice, in contrast with future punishment. The joys and sorrows in these two verses are turned around, measure for measure reversed. The rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) illustrate these contrasts in the present and the future. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 26:

“in the same manner did their fathers” -- literally, their fathers did the same things to the false prophets. That is they spoke well, finely of false prophets. “Of you” -- to speak one fair, to speak well of one. (INT--Robinson)

Session 9

(2) THE SIMILES OF SALT AND LIGHT

Matthew 5:13-16

1. Read Matthew 5:13-16 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference
2. Read Matthew 5:13
(1) Mark 9:50 (2) Luke 14:34-35
3. Read Matthew 5:14
(1) John 8:12
4. Read Matthew 5:15
(1) Mark 4:21 (3) Luke 11:33
(2) Luke 8:16
5. Read Matthew 5:16
(1) John 3:21

Matthew 5:13-16

- 13 "You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.
- 14 You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden.
- 15 Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house.
- 16 Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.

Comments from JBC:

The function of the disciples is illustrated by the homely metaphors of salt as seasoning and the single lamp that was used in the one-room house of the Palestinian peasant. The explanation of the two images (5:16) refers them to the "good works" of the disciples. By living according to the teaching of Jesus, men will manifest the goodness of "their father in heaven" (a common phrase in Matthew) and will praise God because of what they see. This is very probably the original force of the images. In Matthew's text the image is expanded by the possibility of the loss of savor of salt and the hiding of the light under a measure; he who fails to realize the ideal of the life of the Gospels will be rejected. The related idea of the city on the mountain, which is not explained, appears to be a popular wise saying that is intruded into the context, something like the English "stands out like a sore thumb." In the context of the sermon these sayings serve as an introduction to the lengthy passage that follows; here the disciples are instructed in the manner in which they can become the salt of the earth and the light of the world, and

what the good works are through which God is glorified.

Verse 13:

The saying about tasteless salt may once have circulated separately, and its meaning must necessarily depend on its context. The context of Luke 14:34-35 has to do with disciple-ship, and Matthew explicitly says the disciples are “the salt of the earth;” that is, that which keeps the world from spoiling or being tasteless. A second-century Epistle (Diognetus--chs. 5-6) eloquently develops the theme that the world would come to destruction if the Christians were not present in it. The OT and ancient secular writers employ the metaphor of salt to refer to what is most useful. Salt is also that which stimulates the appetite. A talmudic proverb says tat “the salt of money is [its] scarcity, but the salt of money is [also] charity.” Salt which “lost its taste” no longer has any reason for existence. As Chaucer says, with reference to the morals of the clergy, “If god ruste, what should iren doo?” Pure sodium chloride does not deteriorate. Jesus may have in mind, not deterioration, but adulteration; or perhaps he means that it should be as unthinkable for the disciples to lose their character as for salt to become tasteless. The “salt” of the parallel saying in Mark 9:50 refers to a quality of peaceableness which the disciples must have within themselves. (IB)

“Lost its savor” -- The original Greek verb means something like dull, sluggish, stupid, or foolish, and it means to play the fool, to become foolish, of salt become tasteless, insipid (Mark 9:50). It is common in Syria and Palestine to see salt scattered in piles on the ground because it has lost its flavor, the most worthless thing imaginable. Jesus may have used here a current proverb. (INT-- Robinson)

Verse 14:

The rabbis frequently call God, Israel, the Torah, amongst others “the light of the world.” David is the lamp of Israel (II Samuel 21:17), and his descendants are called lights in I Kings 11:36; Psalm 132:17; Luke 2:22. The term has been applied to Jews: “Be ye. the lights of Israel, purer than all the Gentiles ... What will all the Gentiles do if you are darkened by transgressions?” The saying about the “city” may, like verse 13, originally have been a secular proverb: its meaning depends upon its context. Here the thought is: “Light is certain to be noticed.” (IB)

Verse 15:

Light, like salt, must be useful. The clay lamp of Palestine lights the entire one-room house. A “bushel” is more nearly a peck-measure. (IB)

“Under the bushel” -- not a bushel. The figure is taken from lowly cottage life. There was a projecting stone in the wall on which the lamp was set. The house consisted of a single room, so that the tiny light sufficed for all. It was not put under the bushel (the only one in the room) except for the purpose of putting it out, or hiding it. The bushel was an earthenware grain measure. “The stand” not the “candlestick”. It is a “lamp-stand” in each of the twelve examples in the Bible. There was the one-stand for the single room. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 16:

The application shifts from the character of the disciples to their good works, which result from that character. The verse may be Matthew’s comment. (IB)

“Even so” -- The adverb points backward to the lamp-stand. Thus men are to let their light shine, not to glorify themselves, but “your Father in heaven.” Light shines to

see others by, not to call attention to itself. (INT--Robinson)

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(3) TEACHING ABOUT THE LAW

Matthew 5:17-20

6. Read Matthew 5:17-20 entirely through one time.

(1) No reference

7. Read Matthew 5:17

(1) No reference

8. Read Matthew 5:18

(1) Luke 16:17

9. Read Matthew 5:19-20

(1) No reference

Matthew 5:17-20

17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.

18 Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place.

19 Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

20 I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Overview from JBC:

In the initial encounter of the Gospel with Judaism, as well as in those primitive churches that were entirely or largely Jewish in membership, the attitude of Jesus and the church to the Law was an urgent question. The Law had a sacredness and a saving value in Pharisaic Judaism that do not perfectly reflect the place of the Law in pre-exilic Israel. The Law was thought to be the summary of all wisdom--human and divine, the revelation of God himself, a complete and a secure guide of conduct and endowed with a sacramental assurance of good relations with God. This value of the Law Jesus did not and could not accept; implicitly for most Jews the Law was the terminal revelation of God.

The attitude of the NT books toward the Law is not homogenous. This does not mean that it is inconsistent, but simply that it reflects the development of the Christian understanding of the Law, and its relation to the Gospel. One can trace the uneasy stages of this development in the epistles of Paul. A certain superficial inconsistency could be found, if one wished to be overly critical, even in 5:17-20, and much more easily in the

entire Sermon on the Mount. To affirm inconsistency ignores the subtlety and the complexity of the problem, as well as the historical conditions in which Jesus proclaimed the gospel. This introductory passage is Matthew's effort to state Jesus' position toward the Law in general. It must be read with the rest of the Gospel in mind.

Overview from IB:

These sayings, like 23:21-3, seem to teach a complete acceptance of the old religion, while in other passages the new and the old are sharply contrasted; see, for example 11:12-13 (= Luke 16:16); 15:11 (= Mark 7:15); Luke 13:10-17; Mark 3:1-6. The same apparent contradiction is found even in the sermon, for Jesus sweeps aside the law of oaths (verse 33-37). Could Jesus have spoken verses 18-19 if he made radical changes in the Sabbath and purity laws? Scholars are not agreed regarding his attitude to the written and oral Torah. Jesus accepted the OT law in principle and assumed that it was the permanently binding revelation of God; but he made the ritual commandments subordinate to moral duties, opposed the development of purity laws, and went further than the Pharisees in relaxing the Sabbath laws to meet human needs. In fact, his emphasis on the spirit of the law, and his occasional quoting of one passage against another, necessarily involved a new view of Torah. Was he fully conscious of the implications of this? His opponents, at least, realized that his teaching endangered their position. When his movement finally impinged on the Gentile world, his teaching was carried to its logical conclusion by Stephen, the Hellenists, and Paul.

Verse 17:

not to abolish -- it was not the mission of Jesus to annul (break down, as a camp) the Law and the Prophets; these two words are often used to designate the whole collection of the books of the OT, and they are used in this sense here. His mission is to "fulfill" them. (JBC)

fulfill -- This word cannot refer to a simple literal observance; the following six examples negate such a facile interpretation. "Fulfill" means to bring the Law to perfection, to give it that finality the Pharisees believed it possessed. Jesus affirms indirectly that the Law is imperfect, unfinished; he will perfect and finish it. In popular messianism the Messiah had a relation to the Law, but it was not a relation of bringing the Law to completeness. Jesus affirms the enduring, even eternal reality of the Law that we find affirmed in the rabbinical writings; but it is the finished and perfect Law that endures, not the Law of Moses with its explanatory oral teachings. (JBC)

Verse 17 may well express Jesus' purpose. The Gospels contain several sayings which begin with the words "I am come." Some scholars are inclined to doubt their genuineness because they deal with the nature of Jesus' mission, which was of such vital interest to the church. But Jesus could have made such a statement as this in controversy. "To fulfill" means simply "to fill"; that is, "to enforce" or "to express it in its full significance." Therefore the saying serves as an introduction to verses 21-48. Jews, in their second-century controversies with Christians, quoted it like this: "I, the gospel, am not come to take away the Torah of Moses, but to add to it." (IB)

"I came not to destroy, but to fulfill" -- The verb "destroy" means to "loosen down" as of a house or tent (II Corinthians 5:1). Fulfill is to fill full. This Jesus did to the ceremonial law which pointed to him, and the moral law which he kept. He came to

fill the law, to reveal the full depth of meaning that it was intended to hold. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 18:

Amen -- In this affirmation Jesus uses the solemn “Amen” that is so common in the Gospels. There is no parallel to this use of the word. It usually expresses agreement with a statement or a wish, particularly a prayer; Jesus uses it as a solemn element of his own words. (JBC)

jot -- This word is used in some versions to mean the Hebrew consonant, *yodh*, the smallest of the 22 consonants in the late or square Hebrew script. (JBC)

tittle -- This word is used in some versions; it is literally “little horn”; and it is less certain in regards to its meaning. It probably designates the small decorative “horn” added to many Hebrew consonants in the square script. (JBC)

until all things have taken place -- A deliberately obscure phrase; the Law will not pass until it has been finished and perfected by the Messianic work of Jesus. (JBC)

“Truly” and “verily” are the nearest English equivalents of “amen”, a Hebrew word which the Greek Gospels leave untranslated. “Amen, I say to you” is one of Jesus’ characteristic phrases, and marks a solemn assertion of divine truth. Verses 17-20 must have been useful to conservative Jewish Christians in their disputes with liberals. These verses perhaps received their present form between 30 and 50 A.D. Even though they are in the language of Oriental exaggeration, they apparently validate the entire ceremonial law. “The law” in question is the written OT. “Not an iota”--“iota” (“jot”) is the smallest Greek letter and corresponds to the Hebrew *yodh* (י), the smallest character of the Hebrew alphabet. “Not a dot” (“tittle”), or perhaps a corner or stroke of a letter, “will pass” away from this law. Almost identical rabbinical sayings can be found. (IB)

“one jot or one tittle” -- Not an iota, not a comma, not the smallest letter, not a particle. The iota is the smallest Greek vowel, which Matthew here uses to represent the Hebrew *yod* (jot), the smallest Hebrew letter. “Tittle” is from the Latin *titulus* which came to mean the stroke above an abbreviated word, then any small mark. It is not certain here whether *kerea* means a little horn, the mere point which distinguishes some Hebrew letters from others or the “hook” letter *Vav*. Sometimes *yod* and *vav* were hardly distinguishable. In rabbinic literature, the guilt of altering one of them is pronounced so great that if it were done the world would be destroyed. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 19:

Jesus accepts the rabbinical distinction between “heavy” and “light” commandments; the rabbis counted 613 distinct precepts in the Pentateuch and classified them according to their seriousness. From the terms “great” and “small” the words of praise and condemnation are derived. This again is not a program of literal Pharisaic observances; in fact, it is most probably the Pharisees who are meant by those who teach and practice non-observance; see 15:3-6; 23:16-26. The non-observance by Jesus of the traditional Sabbath ordinances and of the laws of Levitical cleanliness was a frequent source of controversy. Jesus is not recommending here that which he repudiated in teaching and practice. The Law therefore that the disciples are to “do and teach” is again the perfect and complete law. Observance of the Law and the traditions will secure the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees; this righteousness of the disciples must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees; it is a submission to the will of God that

goes beyond the observance of the Law. What this departure from the Law means is illustrated in the following six examples (verses 21-48). Paul also speaks of a righteousness of the Law that is not true righteousness and does not save; true righteousness is achieved through faith in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:20; 10:5; Galatians 2:16; 3:21; Philippians 3:9). For Matthew also, faith is that which saves. (JBC)

“whoever ... relaxes”: The Greek verb is translated “loose” in 18:18, a verse which refers to the rabbinical privilege of declaring certain actions permitted or forbidden. “One of the least of these commandments”: The rabbis drew distinctions between “light” and “heavy” precepts, sometimes contrasting easier commands with those which are more difficult, sometimes referring to those whose infraction was a more or less serious matter. But, in general, they held that all were law and were to be observed. The Mishnah says, “Be as circumspect about a light commandment as about a heavy” (James 2:10-11; Galatians 5:3). To “teach men so” is, if possible, worse than breaking the law oneself; Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, was proverbially wicked because he not only sinned but made Israel to sin (I Kings 14:16). The saying could easily have been used against Paul. According to 20:25-27, greatness in the kingdom is based on lowly service. (IB)

“Shall do and teach” -- Jesus puts practice before preaching. The teacher must apply the doctrine to himself before he is qualified to teach others. The scribes and Pharisees were men who “say and do not” (Matthew 23:3), who preach but do not perform. This is Jesus’ test of greatness. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 20:

This verse fits reasonably well with verse 17 but not with verse 19. “Scribes and Pharisees” are overlapping but not identical groups. Among the scribes or experts in the law were to be found both Pharisees and Sadducees, and only a small proportion of the Pharisaic party was composed of scribes. There was no finer standard of righteousness in the ancient world than the Pharisaic, with its emphasis on personal holiness and social responsibility. But, like most systems of ethics, it was adjusted to the capabilities of mankind, and it made allowances for the weakness of human nature and the demands made on man by his environment. Thus the Mishnah teaches that at the final judgment a man will be judged on the basis of the majority of his deeds. Jesus, on the contrary, would have men aspire, not to what is socially expedient, but to that righteousness which will be perfectly manifest in the kingdom of God. His disciples are, so far as possible, to live in this age as though they were already living in the age to come. (IB)

“shall exceed” -- overflow like a river out of its banks and then Jesus adds “more.” A daring statement on Jesus’ part that they had to be better than the rabbis. They must excel the scribes, the small number of regular teachers (Matthew 5:21-48), and the Pharisees in the Pharisaic life (Matthew 6:1-18) who were the separated ones, the orthodox pietists. (INT--Robinson)

Summary from LToJC:

The previous beatitudes as well as the Sermon on the Mount in its entirety present to us not the observance of the Law as it was written on stone, but the realization of the Law which, by the Spirit, is written on the fleshly tablets of the heart. Jesus’ object was to present the Kingdom of God in its characteristic features. It was necessary in order to mark the real continuity of the NT with the OT, to show the relation of the one to the

other. This is the object of verses 17-20, the last-mentioned verse forming at the same time a grand climax and transition to the criticism of the OT Law in its merely literal application, such as the scribes and the Pharisees made. Taking even the letter of the Law, there is not only progression, but almost contrast, between the righteousness of the Kingdom and that set forth by the teachers of Israel. A detailed criticism of the Law will now follow in the remaining verses of chapter 5 -- and that not as interpreted and applied by "tradition" but in its barely literal meaning. In this part of the Sermon on the Mount the careful reader will mark an analogy with Exodus 21 and 22.

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(4) TEACHING ABOUT ANGER

Matthew 5:21-26

10. Read Matthew 5:21-26 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference
11. Read Matthew 5:21
(1) Exodus 20:13 (2) Deuteronomy 5:17
12. Read Matthew 5:22
(1) James 1:19-20
13. Read Matthew 5:23
(1) Mark 11:25
14. Read Matthew 5:24
(1) No reference
15. Read Matthew 5:25-26
(1) Matthew 18:34-35 (2) Luke 12:58-59

Matthew 5:21-26

- 21 "You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.'
- 22 But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, 'Raca,' will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna.
- 23 Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you,
- 24 leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.
- 25 Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court with him. Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison.

26 Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.

Overview from JBC:

In each of the six examples that follow, the statement of the Law (not distinguished from its explanation in tradition) is directly opposed to the pronouncement of Jesus: "I say." The statement of the Law is impersonal; the quotations are not attributed to God himself. This may reflect Jewish delicacy in speaking of the deity, and it also avoids an antithesis between the words of God and the words of Jesus.

Overview from IB:

Contrasts such as those found in verses 21-26, 27-30, and 33-37 are alike in that Jesus takes an OT maxim and surpasses it by forbidding not only the overt crime but the disposition behind it. But contrasts found in verses 31-32, 38-42, and 43-47 are annulments of the existing code as it was popularly understood. Some of the latter sayings may not originally have begun with a formula. Verse 31 contains the formula but the parallel verse Luke 16:18 does not.

Verse 21:

You shall not kill -- The commandment is quoted according to Exodus 20:15; Deuteronomy 5:18; the added statement concerning the judgment is not a quotation from the OT, but judicial processes for murder are mentioned (see Exodus 21:12; Numbers 35:16-33). Jesus does not distinguish between willful murder and casual homicide (Exodus 21:13; Numbers 35:10; Deuteronomy 19:4-6), for accidental homicide does not fall under moral consideration. (JBC)

The hearers presumably are unlearned. Instead of reading the Bible they "have heard that it was said to the men of old"; or, perhaps: "this is the tradition you have received." "You shall not kill" is the command of Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17. The next phrase sums up the OT law: "Whoever kills shall be liable to judgment;" that is, conviction and punishment by properly constituted authority (presumably the local Sanhedrin composed of 23 members). (IB)

Verse 22:

whoever is angry -- What Jesus prohibits is not murder but anger; and the mere feeling of anger is liable to the court's judgment, a procedure that in the Law follows murder. There is an element of exaggeration here: anger is not the object of legal action. Jesus rather means that anger, the passion that impels to murder, is as guilty an action as murder itself. The Law is restated. Expressions of anger in speech without violent action are disapproved in even stronger language. There is a climax in the penalties; the words move from the *krisis*, the judgment (which probably designates the local court), to the *synedrion* (council, Sanhedrin), the supreme legal body in Judaism, to the *gehenna* of fire, the final punishment God inflicts. No similar climax can be perceived in *raka* and *more*. *Raka* is probably the Aram word found as an abusive term in the Talmud, meaning "fool," empty-headed", and can scarcely be distinguished from the Greek *moros*. Efforts to find a climax in the terms, or to discover some particularly insulting quality in *moros* are fallacious; interpreters are deceived by the severity of Jesus, and they cannot believe that he speaks so sternly of simple abusive language. The point is that the two words have no peculiar force beyond that of colloquial abusive terms like "idiot," "blockhead," "numbskull", "stupid", and their equivalents in all languages. It is just this type of

language as an expression of anger that Jesus totally forbids. He strengthens the prohibition of murder by going to the very roots of mutual dislike. (JBC)

“But I say to you”: A rabbi cited authorities, and a prophet said, “Thus says Yahweh” or “oracle of Yahweh”. Jesus, perhaps deliberately, dispenses with such locutions, either because of a sense of divine inspiration or because the truth of his assertion should be transparently clear. He certainly spoke as one having authority (7:29). “Without a cause” is not found in some of the best manuscripts and earliest fathers. It is a gloss which seriously weakens Jesus’ teaching. Under Jewish law, how could an angry man “be liable to judgment”; and can Jesus mean that the courts should punish anger? It seems better to suppose that he thinks of the divine judgment. (IB)

The essential meaning of the verse is clear. Murder is a result of anger; and Jesus would prevent crimes of violence by rooting out the elements in man’s character which make him kill. A first-century rabbi is quoted as saying: “He who hates his neighbor, behold he is one who belongs to the shedders of blood.” The difference is that Jesus proposes to take vigorous action against anger. (IB)

The details of the saying are difficult. (1) Are the sins arranged in ascending order: anger, the insult of “*Raca*,” and the worse insult “fool”? But the consequences of the three sins are not in this order, unless the “judgment” is an earthly one. A talmudic passage, however, reads, “He who says ‘slave’ to his neighbor shall be excommunicated; he who says ‘bastard’ to him shall receive forty [lashes]; he who says ‘godless’ to him, it is a matter of his life.” (2) Perhaps “shall be liable to the council” is an interpolation. In this case “*Raca*” and “fool” are coupled together as putting one in danger of Gehenna, and all three members of verse 22 stand in contrast to verse 21. (3) Or perhaps: “The ancients have been told, whoever says ‘*Raca*’ to his brother shall be liable to the Sanhedrin, but I say to you that whoever says ‘fool’ [a similar insult] shall be liable to the Gehenna of fire.” (IB)

“*Raca*” has often been identified with a rabbinical “good-for-nothing” or “wretch,” which would mean about the same as “fool.” But a Greek insult, of which *racha* is probably a vocative, has been discovered in a papyrus. Its exact meaning is unknown. Forms of the Greek *moros* (“fool”) are known in rabbinical literature as loan words, and there is a Hebrew word *moreh*, meaning “stubborn,” “insubordinate.” (IB)

By the first century A.D. many Jews believed in “the hell (Gehenna) of fire” as a place where sinners were tormented, either after the final judgment or in the intermediate period before the judgment. The name is derived from the *ge Hinnom* or valley of Hinnom (Joshua 15:8), southwest of Jerusalem, where human sacrifices had been offered and refuse was still burned. When this allusion is combined with the ideas of Isaiah 31:9; 66:24, the conception of a fiery hell resulted (Enoch 54:1-2; 56:3-4; II Baruch 59:10; 85:13). The older idea had been that good and bad alike went to Sheol, where there was no punishment and no joy. (IB)

“But I say unto you” -- Jesus thus assumes a tone of superiority over the Mosaic regulations and proves it in each of the six examples. He goes further than the Law into the very heart. “*Raca*” and “fool”-- The first is probably an Aramaic word meaning “empty,” a frequent word for contempt. The second word is Greek (dull, stupid) and is a fair equivalent of “*raca*”. It is urged by some that “fool” is a Hebrew word, but others object to that idea. “*Raca*” expresses contempt for a man’s head--“you stupid!” “Fool”

expresses contempt for his heart and character--“you scoundrel!” “The hell of fire”-- “the Gehenna of fire,” describing Gehenna as marked by fire. Gehenna is the Valley of Hinnom where the fire burned continuously. Here idolatrous Jews once offered their children to Molech (II Kings 23:10). Jesus finds one cause of murder to be abusive language. Gehenna should be carefully distinguished from Hades which is never used for the place of punishment, but for the place of departed spirits, without reference to their moral condition. The place of torment is in Hades (Luke 16:33), but so is heaven. (INT--Robinson).

Verse 23:

Should men yield to anger, which is conceived as unavoidable, the sacred duty of reconciliation arises. The directions in 5:23-24 go as far as possible to make clear the urgency of this duty. Worship was to a Jew the most sacred action in which a man could engage. But worship must be postponed for reconciliation. The primacy of fraternal relations over cultic duties is established beyond all doubt; and this again is a restatement of the Law. The case in 5:23-24 is not the case of one who feels anger but of one who has excited anger in another; it is irrelevant to the duty of reconciliation who started the quarrel. (JBC)

The “gift” is probably a special sacrifice (as in 23:18-19). The original hearers would interpret “brother” as ‘fellow Jew’, but Jesus probably did not so restrict it (Luke 10:29-37). (IB)

Verse 24:

It is idle for a man to try to maintain right relations with God through worship if he is not at peace with his neighbor. As the Mishnah says, “The day of Atonement atones for offenses of man against God, but it does not atone for offenses against man’s neighbor, until he reconciles his neighbor.” It is better to leave the church at the most sacred moment of worship than to delay a reconciliation. (IB)

“first be reconciled” -- get reconciled. A papyrus example from the second century A.D. says that a prodigal son wrote to his mother in these words: I beseech thee, mother, be reconciled with me.” The boy is a poor speller, but with a broken heart he uses the identical form that Jesus does. The verb denotes mutual concession after mutual hostility. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 25:

“agree with” -- (friendly, kindly disposed). Compromise is better than prison where no principle is involved, but only personal interest. It is so easy to see principle where pride is involved. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 25-26:

This saying is found in Luke 12:57-59 in an eschatological context. It is probably original in this context. (JBC)

your opponent -- “your adversary”. In the context of Luke it is most probably not the brother with whom one has a dispute, but God, whose judgment the sinner is in danger of incurring. By transferring the saying to this context Matthew has altered its meaning. He makes of the saying an expansion of the commandment of reconciliation, in which the element of urgency is again expressed. The eschatological threat adds to the severity of the commandment; but it is scarcely possible to overstate the sternness that Jesus everywhere voices toward those who refuse to love. (JBC)

Matthew's context for the saying is artificial. To him it means: "Tomorrow it may be too late to be reconciled, and you will be in danger of Gehenna." Luke 12:57-59, the better parallel passage, is in a context dealing with the end of the age, where it fits better. The thought is: "If you were on your way to trial, you would try to settle the case out of court. Likewise, the time to get right with God is now." One should not attempt to find allegorical meanings for the "accuser," "judge," and "guard." These are simply details of the figure, although one rabbinical saying is that "God is judge, witness, and plaintiff." (IB)

Verse 26:

"the last farthing" -- this is a vivid illustration of the inevitable punishment for debt. (INT-- Robinson)

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(5) TEACHING ABOUT ADULTERY

Matthew 5:27-30

16. Read Matthew 5:27-30 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference
17. Read Matthew 5:27
(1) Exodus 20:14 (2) Deuteronomy 5:18
18. Read Matthew 5:28
(1) No reference
19. Read Matthew 5:29-30
(1) Matthew 18:8-9 (2) Mark 9:43-47

Matthew 5:27-30

- 27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'
- 28 But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.
- 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna.
- 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body go into Gehenna.

Verse 27:

You shall not commit adultery -- The commandment is quoted according to Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17. Jesus does not attend to the penalties prescribed in the Law for adultery, which was normally a capital crime (Deuteronomy 22:22). Neither does he mention illicit sexual relations that are not adulterous, although these are treated of in the Law. (JBC)

Jewish law restricted the term “adultery” to sexual intercourse with the wife or the betrothed of a Jew. But in verse 28 the term apparently denotes illicit intercourse with any woman. As in verse 32, the man is thought of as the one directly responsible for the sin. (IB)

The quotations from Exodus and Deuteronomy are from the LXX. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 28:

looks ... with lust -- As in the discussion of murder, the supreme offense is taken as the point beyond which Jesus advances. The statement is brief; the gaze of lustful desire is as guilty as the adulterous action. The lustful gaze is mentioned very frequently in the rabbinical literature, and it is disapproved of with scarcely less vigor than we find in the Gospel passage. The restatement of the Law is directed again at the roots of the impulse. (JBC)

There are close parallels in rabbinical literature; for example, “Everyone who looks at a woman [lustfully] is as though he had lain with her.” Coveting a neighbor’s wife was forbidden by the tenth commandment (Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21). Jesus simply emphasizes this. He considers that the desire is as culpable as the act, and, as in the previous section, would prevent the act by reforming man’s desires (cf. also 7:16-18 and parallels). The rabbis, however, held generally that a man’s good intentions are reckoned to him as good deeds, while his evil intentions are counted only if he succumbs to them. (IB)

“in his heart” -- Not just the center of the blood circulation although it also means that. Not just the emotional part of man’s nature, but here the inner man including the intellect, the affections, and the will. The word is exceedingly common in the NT and deserves careful study always. It is from a root word that means to quiver or palpitate. Jesus locates adultery in the eye and heart before the outward act. Two pertinent rabbinical sayings are: “The eye and the heart are the two brokers of sin” and “passions lodge in him who sees.” Therefore, the peril of lewd pictures and plays to the pure. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 29:

“Causes you to stumble” -- This is far better than “offend you.” It has been rightly interpreted as “ensnare you.” It is not the notion of giving offence or provoking, but of setting a trap or snare for one. It means the stick in the trap that springs and closes the trap when the animal touches it. Pluck out the eye when it is a snare, cut off the hand, even the right hand. These vivid pictures are not to be taken literally, but powerfully plead for self-mastery. It is not mutilating of the body that Christ enjoins, but control of the body against sin. The man who plays with fire will get burnt. Modern surgery finely illustrates the teaching of Jesus. For example, if the diseased tonsils, teeth, or appendix are diseased, then they must be removed so as not to destroy the whole body. Cut them out in time and the life will be saved. Certainly slander is a scandal and a stumbling-block, a trap, and a snare. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 29-30:

The expansion in these verses is found also in 18:8-9, in a form that shows more clearly the dependence of Matthew on Mark 9:43-48. Matthew has detached the saying from its original context, in spite of the fact that the hand is less relevant to the topic than

the eye. The passage is rewritten for the present context. (JBC)

A similar saying in 18:8-9 occurs in a context dealing with stumbling blocks. Here the connection is more artificial, for the emphasis tends to be put on one kind of sin only. Jesus mentions the “right eye” because he will next of the “right hand,” which is ordinarily more useful than the left. The eye can provoke to sin; there are parallels in Job 31:1, in the rabbis, and in pagan writers. “Causes you to sin” correctly explains the familiar Jewish metaphor of the stumbling block, which is discussed later on 11:6. The idea that the moral life is a walk or a journey also lies behind the terms “halakah” (the way to walk) and “transgression”, and such sayings as 7:13-14. This saying, like Mark 10:25, is Oriental exaggeration and teaches that one must, at all cost, remove from one’s life anything that will lead to sin. (IB)

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(6) TEACHING ABOUT DIVORCE

Matthew 5:31-32

20. Read Matthew 5:31-32 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference
21. Read Matthew 5:21
(1) Deuteronomy 24:1 (2) Matthew 19:3-9
22. Read Matthew 5:22
(1) Luke 16:18 (2) I Corinthians 7:10-11

Matthew 5:31-32

- 31 "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce.'
32 But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

See also 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18 (JBC)

Overview from IB:

A similar saying is found in Luke 16:18. Both may come from Q. Other evidence on Jesus’ attitude to divorce is found in 19:3-9 (= Mark 10:2-12) and in I Corinthians 7:10-11. The Marcan section, like this passage, contrasts the OT law with Jesus’ ruling.

Verse 31:

Whoever divorces his wife -- The statement of the Law is a very loose paraphrase and compendium of Deuteronomy 24:1, omitting the phrases that deal with the occasion of the divorce -- the wife does not find favor with her husband because he has found “something shameful” in her. The meaning of this obscure phrase was extensively discussed by the Rabbis. Rabbinical tradition tells of two governing views in NT times: the opinion of Shammai, who permitted divorce only for adultery, and the opinion of Hillel, who permitted divorce for the love of another woman or for causes as trivial as

inferior cooking. The law of Deuteronomy actually deals only indirectly with divorce; its object is the prohibition of the reunion of partners after a divorce. (JBC)

The “certificate of divorce”, prescribed in Deuteronomy 24:1, had the effect of clarifying the woman’s status; the husband had no further claim on her. Some non-Jewish rabbis [the tannaitic rabbis] put the emphasis on the rights of the more helpless party, and took every precaution to insure that if she was divorced she should receive a writ which was valid in every respect and could not be retracted by a whimsical husband. While the woman could not divorce her husband, she could go before the court and compel him to divorce her if he had certain diseases, if he was engaged in certain obnoxious trades, made vows to her detriment, or forced her to make such vows. According to the school of Hillel the husband could, theoretically, divorce his wife “for any cause” (19:3), although the rabbis bitterly condemned divorce for frivolous reasons. The school of Shammai regarded unchastity and perhaps immodesty as the only allowable causes for divorce. (IB)

“a writing of divorcement” -- a divorce certificate, a written notice of divorce, in commercial transactions as a bond of release. The written notice was a protection to the wife against an angry whim of the husband who might send her away with no paper to show for it. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 32:

whoever divorces his wife -- The saying was found in Mark and Q, and Matthew used both sources. The clarity of the saying in Mark and Luke is undisputed; there Jesus simply forbids divorce entirely. Mark’s formula reflects Roman law, which allowed the wife to institute divorce; Matthew and Luke allude to the Jewish practice, in which only the husband could divorce. (JBC)

unless the marriage is unlawful -- Or, “unless the case of unchastity.” This exception clause is universally regarded as an expansion of the original form. Many interpreters and the Greek church understand it as a permission of divorce for adultery. But this is so plainly out of harmony with Mark and Luke that it seems improbable. Matthew is the only Gospel that seems to allude to the rabbinical disputes; the allusion is quite clear in 19:3. The interpretation of the phrase as an exception to the repudiation of divorce would place Jesus with the school of Shammai. If Matthew meant adultery, he chose a less apt word for it; the original word used means literally “prostitution,” and it designates unchaste conduct generally. There is another Greek word which means “adultery,” which is not used here. The distinction between the two words is not so rigid as to make it impossible that here the original word used might mean adultery. Nevertheless, if the verse is translated “he who dismisses his wife, except for adultery, makes her commit adultery,” the saying sounds quaint, to say the least--the divorced wife commits adultery unless she has already committed adultery. One scholar has called attention to a rabbinical use of a Hebrew word, which would be translated by the Greek word for adultery, to designate an unlawful union of concubinage. He further proposed that it was this type of union that was designated by the exception. It is easier to understand this interpretation if one recalls that Greek has no distinct noun for “wife.” Literally the sentence reads: “Every one who sends away his woman--except in the case of concubinage--makes her commit adultery.” This seems to be the most satisfactory interpretation of the passage, and it explains the exceptive clause from the Jewish

background that is so often apparent in Matthew. (JBC)

The phrase “except on the ground of unchastity” is regarded by most modern critics as Matthew’s (or perhaps M’s) addition to the original tradition. Jesus originally made no exceptions, but the church, as here and in I Corinthians 7:12-15, had to legislate for hard cases. Matthew believed (18:18) that Jesus had given the church this power. Whether the church was justified in taking this stand is a question of theology, not of scientific exegesis. The word translated “unchastity” may refer to premarital unchastity, or it may also include adultery. “Makes her an adulteress”--the assumption is that she would probably marry again. This may be Matthew’s rewriting of Mark 10:12, rather than a word of Jesus. “Whoever marries a divorced woman” -- the emphasis is on the sin of the man, whose offense is partly against the first husband. The woman does not “marry”; she is “given in marriage.” (IB)

“saving for the cause of fornication” -- an unusual phrase that perhaps means “except for a matter of unchastity.” Except on the ground of unchastity, except unfaithfulness, and is equivalent to that in Matthew 19:9. It has been denied that Jesus made this exception because Mark and Luke do not give it. The claim is that the early Christians made the exception to meet a pressing need, but one fails to see the force of this charge against Matthew’s report of the words of Jesus. It looks like criticism to meet modern needs. (INT--Robinson)

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(7) TEACHING ABOUT OATHS

Matthew 5:33-37

23. Read Matthew 5:33-37 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference
24. Read Matthew 5:33
(1) Leviticus 19:12 (2) Numbers 30:3
25. Read Matthew 5:34-37
(1) Psalm 48:3 (3) Isaiah 66:1
(2) Sirach 23:9 (4) James 5:12

Matthew 5:33-37

- 33 "Again you have heard that it was said to your ancestors, 'Do not take a false oath, but make good to the Lord all that you vow.'
34 But I say to you, do not swear at all; not by heaven, for it is God's throne;
35 nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.
36 Do not swear by your head, for you cannot make a single hair white or black.
37 Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.' Anything more is from the evil one.
-

Verse 33:

Do not take a false oath -- some versions have: you must not swear falsely -- The statement of the Law is not a direct quotation, but a paraphrase of such passages as Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:3; Deuteronomy 23:22. The statement in Matthew's paraphrase does not distinguish vows and oaths: it prohibits perjury and commands that vows be paid. (JBC)

This is not an exact citation of any OT passage, but a summary of the teaching of Leviticus 19:12; Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11; Numbers 30:3; Deuteronomy 23:22 (IB)

Verses 34-35:

Instead of inculcating greater fidelity to oaths, Jesus sweeps away the whole mechanics of swearing. The very taking of oaths presumes that men frequently lie and will not tell the truth unless they are compelled to do so. But Jesus' followers must be completely truthful. Their simple assertion should be sufficient. If the divorce saying is taken as a law, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that this, and verses 38-42, are also laws. Jesus' Jewish hearers would have understood this saying in this way, since all types of oaths was by the name of Yahweh, but the rabbis regarded various other names of God as equally binding. Swearing by "heaven" or "earth" was not, however, binding. Jesus therefore prohibits idle and meaningless swearing along with the religious oath. He alludes to Isaiah 66:1 in giving his reason: to swear by God's creations is to swear by the creator; cf. on 23:16-22. Vows by "Jerusalem", though not oaths, are known in rabbinical literature. The principle is the same: it is the city of God, who is its "great King" (Psalm 48:2; Tobit 13:15). (IB)

Verse 34:

do not swear at all -- In particular Jesus forbids the type of evasion that substitutes for the divine name something less sacred. If a sacred object is mentioned in an oath, it is as if the divine name were being used. The identity of such objects with the deity is shown by quotations from Isaiah 66:1; Psalm 47:3 (quoted according to the LXX). (JBC)

More exactly "not to swear at all". Certainly Jesus does not prohibit oaths in a court of justice for he himself answered Caiaphas on oath. Paul made solemn appeals to God (I Thessalonians 5:27; I Corinthians 15:31). Jesus prohibits all forms of profanity. The Jews were past-masters in the art of splitting hairs about allowable and forbidden oaths or forms of profanity just as modern Christians employ a great variety of vernacular "cuss-words" and excuse themselves because they do not use the more flagrant forms. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 36:

by your head -- Nor should you swear by one's self. All of the formulas mentioned in this verse, except "by Jerusalem", are attested in biblical or extra biblical Jewish literature. A simple affirmative or negative is sufficient; more than this is "from evil." (JBC)

A rabbinic tractate holds that the adjuration "Swear to me by the life of thy head" is binding, although Rabbi Me'ir ruled otherwise. Jesus says that such an oath is by God, who alone has power over the color of one's hair. (IB)

Verse 37:

The ambiguity of the Greek permits this last phrase to be rendered either "from

evil” or “from the evil one”; see 5:39. In either translation the meaning is the same; the oath is a reflection of the evil condition of man, exhibiting both his mendacity, against which the oath is thought to protect, and his distrust of his fellow man. (JBC)

The passage is echoed rather closely in James 5:12. Like the other antithesis, the statement is paradoxical. The prohibition of perjury is intended to secure truthfulness in situations where a solemn affirmation or denial is demanded. In the new ethics of Jesus truthfulness will be secured not by an oath but by the inner integrity of the person. The oath, because of its implications of mendacity and lack of confidence, can have no place in a society that does not assume evil as a matter of course. (JBC)

A simpler (and possibly more nearly original) form of the saying is found in James 5:12. The doubled affirmative and negative are merely for emphasis. Oaths result from the evil which is present in the world or perhaps from “the Evil One” (cf. 6:13; 13:38). In the later case, Matthew has probably added the phrase. (IB)

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(8) TEACHING ABOUT RETALIATION

Matthew 5:38-42

Luke 6:29-30

26. Read Matthew 5:38-42 entirely through one time.
(1) Luke 6:29-30
27. Read Matthew 5:38
(1) Exodus 21:24 (2) Leviticus 24:19-20
28. Read Matthew 5:39-40
(1) No reference
29. Read Matthew 5:41
(1) Lamentations 3:30
30. Read Matthew 5:42
(1) Deuteronomy 15:7-8

Matthew 5:38-42

- 38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'
 - 39 But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on (your) right cheek, turn the other one to him as well.
 - 40 If anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic, hand him your cloak as well.
 - 41 Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him for two miles.
 - 42 Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow.
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Verse 38:

[An eye for an eye](#) -- The law of revenge is quoted loosely from Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21. The law of retaliation was an ancient custom of the Near East that protected individuals by obliging the next of kin to avenge injury or murder or to purchase property to pay the debts of a kinsman. The laws of the Pentateuch are actually restrictions that limit the injury inflicted by the avenger to injury proportionate to the damage done by the aggressor. (JBC)

The principle of retaliation is expressed in Exodus 21:24; Deuteronomy 19:21; Leviticus 24:20. It is as old as the Code of Hammurabi and can be paralleled in the Roman Law of the times. It is possible, although not certain, that in Jesus' time some rabbis permitted a monetary payment in lieu of this punishment. But such a consideration is irrelevant, since the legal principle theoretically still held good. (IB)

"An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" -- with the notion of exchange or substitution. The quotation is from Exodus 21:24; Deuteronomy 19:21; Leviticus 24:20. Like divorce this is a restriction upon unrestrained vengeance. It limited revenge by fixing an exact compensation for an injury. A money payment is allowed in the Mishnah. The law of retaliation exists in Arabia today. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 39:

[offer no resistance to one who is evil](#) -- The customary principle of self-defense is rejected by this saying of Jesus; and the customary principle is not replaced by another principle of self-defense. The saying is probably the most paradoxical of all the sayings of the passage and has certainly been the object of more rationalization than any other. [In keeping with Jesus' character and his way of life, this could only mean "if you do not follow these rules, you are not doing the Father's will"; because, if you are following God's will, then he will provide you protection in all your dealings, according to his divine plan.] The statement is simply not to resist "evil" or "the evil one"; in the context it seems that the person rather than the neuter is meant, and we almost think of "the evil one" as the aggressor. (JBC)

"Do not resist" through violent means of self-defense. "One who is evil" is the correct translation; not "evil" in the abstract. The saying is an illustration of how a right-minded man will act, not a rule to be interpreted legally. One scholar is mistaken in saying that Jesus enjoins this "as a positive principle of action with the definite purpose of ...reconciliation of an enemy." Such is the idea of Romans 12:21 and Proverbs 25:21-22, but Jesus' saying has no cautious motive of any kind. His point is that the mere fact that wrong has been done a man does not give him license to do wrong himself, because Jesus' followers must not retaliate and they must suffer the same injury again, simply because it is God's will that their attitude and conduct should be of this kind. Jesus has in mind the personal relationships of individuals. How far the principle can be applied to groups, and especially to political life, is constantly debated. (IB)

"Resist not him that is evil" -- Is it "the evil man" or the "evil deed"? not to resist a (the) wicked man (?); not to resist an injury (?) [possibly it means both]. The examples will go with either view. Jesus protested when smitten on the cheek (John 18:22). And Jesus denounced the Pharisees (Matthew 23) and fought the devil always. The language of Jesus is bold and picturesque and is not to be pressed too literally. Paradoxes startle and make us think. We are expected to fill in the other side of the picture. One thing

certainly is meant by Jesus and that is that personal revenge is taken out of our hands, and that applies to “lynch law.” Aggressive or offensive war by nations is also condemned, but not necessarily defensive war or defense against robbery and murder. Professional pacifism may be mere cowardice. (INT--Robinson)

When someone strikes you -- Several concrete examples are given that take the saying out of the mere abstract and general. The first area is the area of physical violence, which is not to be with physical violence; it is to be suffered. (JBC)

Verse 40:

The second area is that of legal contention; the disciples are told not to meet legal action with legal action, but to yield what is contested and even beyond what is contested. The garments mentioned are the tunic, a long shirt worn next to the body, and the cloak, a heavier outer garment that protected against cold and rain. These were normally the only two garments worn by the Palestinian peasant. In Exodus 22:25-26 the creditor who takes the cloak in pledge is directed to return it at sundown so that the debtor may have covering for the night. (JBC)

The “coat” is the long undergarment made with sleeves; the “cloak” was worn over it, and the poor used it as a coverlet at night (Exodus 22:26-27). (IB)

“thy coat ... thy cloak also” -- The “coat” is really a sort of shirt or undergarment and would be demanded at law. A robber would seize first the outer garment, or cloak (one coat). If one loses the undergarment at law, the outer one goes also (the more valuable one). (INT--Robinson)

Verse 41:

The third area is that of forced labor or service, a part of the contribution of subjects of ancient states to the government. (JBC)

The Greek word translated “forces” originally had to do with the Persian royal mil; and the English legal term “angary” is derived from it. Couriers could impress men or their property into service to carry the king’s messages. Here the word refers to any kind of forced labor, whether required by the government or by private persons. The Roman “mile” was a little shorter than the English mile. (IB)

“shall compel thee” -- The word is of Persian origin and means public couriers or mounted messengers who were stationed by the King of Persia at fixed localities, with horses ready for use, to send royal messages from one to another. So if a man is passing such a post-station, an official may rush out and compel him to go back to another station to do an errand for the king. This was called impressments into service. This very thing was done to Simon the Cyrene who was thus compelled to carry the cross of Christ (Matthew 27:32). (INT--Robinson)

Verse 42:

The fourth area is that of requests for gifts or loans, which are not to be refused. It is difficult to see how the principle of non-resistance and yielding could be more clearly stated. The rationalizations of the words of Jesus, do not show that his words are impractical or exaggerated, but simply that the Christian world has never been ready and is not ready now to live according to this ethic. The passage is echoed in Romans 12:17-21; I Corinthians 13:5-7. (JBC)

This does not fit well here, since it has nothing to do with force or retaliation. Matthew probably includes it here because it stood here in the Q sermon, as its position in

Luke 6:29-30 shows. Jewish literature is full of counsels to be generous. Jesus does not raise any question as to whether indiscriminate almsgiving is wise, or whether one has duties toward one's own family and others; the point simply is that a religious person will have generous impulses and will act upon them. (IB)

"turn not thou away" -- This is one of the clearest instances of the necessity of accepting the spirit and not the letter of the Lord's commands. Not only does indiscriminate almsgiving do little but injury to society, but the words must embrace far more than almsgiving. Recall again that Jesus is a popular teacher and expects men to understand his paradoxes. In the organized charities of modern life we are in danger of letting the milk of human kindness dry up. (INT--Robinson)

* * * * *

31. Read Luke 6:29-30 entirely through one time
(1) No references

Luke 6:29-30

- 29 To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic.
30 Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back.

Verses 29-30:

These two verses have the second person singular, whereas the preceding and following verses have the plural; Luke evidently is combining sources. The Lucan Sermon on the Plain as well as the Matthaean Sermon on the Mount derives from Church documents that combined various statements of Jesus. (JBC)

strikes you on one cheek -- In Matthew it is clearer that Jesus is referring to legal or verbal action rather than to physical rebuffs. In fact, Matthew casts the entire sermon in a much more legal setting. (JBC)

cloak, ...tunic -- Luke reverses the order found in Matthew. In Palestine, the cloak used for sleeping outdoors is more important than the tunic; it once had a special value as bond (Deuteronomy 24:10-13; Ruth 3:9).

A separate section in Matthew, where it illustrates the principle of non-resistance to evil. The second singular imperative--in contrast to the second plural of the preceding and following verses--also points to some editorial rearrangement on Luke's part. "Cloak" was the outer garment and "coat" the undergarment or "tunic." Verse 29b appears to postulate an act of robbery, while Matthew's version--where the garments are mentioned in reverse order--implies a dispute before a magistrate. Matthew's parallel to verse 30 enjoins a readiness to give and to lend. This may be primitive, for 30b appears to reproduce the thought of 29b. (IB)

on the cheek -- Matthew 5:39 has "right." Old word meaning jaw or jawbone, but is found in the NT, and only here and in Matthew 5:39. It seems an act of violence rather than contempt. Sticklers for extreme literalism find trouble with the conduct of Jesus in John 18:22 where Jesus, on receiving a slap in the face, protested against it. "Thy cloak, thy coat" -- here the upper and more valuable garment is first taken, the under and less

valuable last. In Matthew 5:40 the process (apparently a legal one) is reversed. "Withhold not" -- in prohibition against committing an act. "Do not hinder him in his robbing" -- It is usually useless anyhow with modern armed bandits. (INT--Robinson)
Verse 30:

"Ask them not again" -- a prohibition, do not have the habit of asking back. (INT--Robinson)

* * * * *

(9) LOVE OF ENEMIES

Matthew 5:43-48
Luke 6:27-36

32. Read Matthew 5:43-48 entirely through one time.
(1) Luke 6:27, 32-36
33. Read Matthew 5:43
(1) Leviticus 19:18
34. Read Matthew 5:44-47
(1) No reference
35. Read Matthew 5:48
(1) Leviticus 11:44 (4) James 1:4
(2) Leviticus 19:2 (5) I Peter 1:16
(3) Deuteronomy 18:13 (6) I John 3:3

Matthew 5:43-38

- 43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'
44 But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you,
45 that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust.
46 For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same?
47 And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same?
48 So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Verse 43:

love your neighbor -- The precept of the love of one's neighbor is quoted from Leviticus 19:18; the precept of hating one's enemy is not found in the OT; nor is it a summary of rabbinical teaching as it has been preserved. It no doubt represents the popular understanding of the love of one's neighbor; not one needs to be instructed to hate his enemies. The saying should not be restricted to personal enemies among one's

brotherhood, implying a toleration of hatred of the enemies of one's group; this would not distinguish the Christian from the Gentile or the tax collector (5:46-47). The "neighbor" is the member of one's group or fellowship, one's village or town, one's religion or nation, one's tribe or race. In many languages the same word is used to designate "stranger," "foreigner," or "enemy." The enemy is specified in Matthew as the persecutor, probably a reflection of the experience of the early church. Luke has "those who mistreat you" (6:27). (JBC)

Leviticus 19:16-18, which is quoted here, speaks of "neighbor" in the sense of "fellow Israelite." Jewish commentators correctly point out that the law never commanded the Jew to "hate" his "enemy;" but the OT represents many different stages of religious development, and alongside the friendliness toward aliens inculcated by books like Ruth there are many passages which permit, and even encourage, hostility and retaliation. In Semitic idiom, however, "hate" may mean no more than "love less" or "not to love." (IB)

and hate thine enemy -- This phrase is not in Leviticus 19:18, but is a rabbinical inference which Jesus repudiates bluntly. The Talmud says nothing of love to enemies. Paul in Romans 12:20 quotes Proverbs 25:22 to prove that we ought to treat our enemies kindly. Jesus taught us to pray for our enemies and did it himself even when he hung upon the cross. Our word "neighbor" means one who is nigh or near. But proximity often means strife and not love. Those who have adjoining farms or homes may be positively hostile in spirit. The Jews came to look on members of the same tribe as neighbors as even Jews everywhere. But they hated the Samaritans who were half Jews and lived between Judea and Galilee. Jesus taught men how to act as neighbors by the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29). (INT--Robinson)

Verse 44:

The word translated "love" originally meant "to welcome, entertain, be well pleased, contented," and in the LXX it has as wide a reference as the English word "love." In the NT, however, it denotes the love of God for man and of man for God (I John 3 - 5) and the benevolent loving kindness which seeks the material and spiritual good of others (I Corinthians 13). When Jesus commands love of enemies, he thinks primarily of personal relationships and perhaps also of the relationships of small groups. Such love is the supreme test of the religious man's character. Jesus never deals with the responsibilities of free citizens in a democratic state. His teaching of course has political implications, but how it should be applied is one of the most difficult problems of Christian social ethics. (IB)

Verse 45:

[be children of your heavenly Father](#) -- some versions read "be sons of your Father." The disciples are to show the same indifference to friends and enemies that God shows in his distribution of sunshine and rain; in exhibiting this godlike providence they vindicate their title of sons of God. Love within one's group or fellowship is merely a natural and universal human trait; Matthew uses terms that identify two despised classes among the Jews: The Gentiles and tax farmers. The use of these terms is something of a lapse from the principle Matthew is stating; elsewhere the Gospel is friendly to these despised classes; see 9:10; 11:19; 21:31. By this kind of love the disciples will be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect. (JBC)

This love is to be extended to enemies and persecutors, for such is God's way of dealing with those who neglect him, insult him, and do wrong to his other children. Exodus 23:4-5 and numerous rabbinical sayings look in this direction, but the idea is never made a general maxim for conduct in Judaism. God is better than the highest that man knows, and those who imitate God become, or show themselves to be, his "sons" in the ethical sense (cf. on 5:9). Jesus assumes that God is completely omnipotent and cares directly and personally for all that he has made. Though Jesus is fully conscious of the misfortunes in the world, he raises no question whether rain and sunshine are not sometimes destructive. It is God's loving kindness which stands out and claims his full attention. (IB)

Verse 46:

The "tax collectors" of the Gospels are probably the Jewish employees of chief collectors. Poll taxes and land taxes levied in Judea must have been collected by government officials under the procurator, for Judea was part of the empire. Export and import duties were, however, farmed out to a *publicanus* who contracted to furnish a fixed sum every year. In the empire as a whole such a contractor was often a Roman citizen of equestrian rank, although we are not certain that his was so in Judea; his employees, the "tax collectors" of the Gospels, were probably Jews. In Galilee and Trans-Jordan the duties were collected for the tetrarch's treasury, and even the *publicanus* may have been a Jew. The system made for inequality and oppression, and the Gospels usually couple tax collectors and sinners. Rabbinical writings pass the same unfavorable judgment; and the second-century satirist Lucian classes tax collectors with adulterers and brothel keepers. (IB)

Verse 47:

The usual Jewish greeting was "Peace" (*shalom*) be to you"; in 10:12-13 the disciples use a similar salutation. Since *shalom* includes not only peace, but prosperity, and refers to every kind of material and spiritual well-being, the greeting was actually a prayer. The rabbis taught, by precept and example, that a pious man should greet everyone and be the first to make the salutation; but probably not everyone was so well-disposed. (IB)

Verse 48:

This verse is conflated from Deuteronomy 18:13 and Leviticus 19:2, where the word "holy" is used. "Perfect" represents the Hebrew word for "whole" or "integral;" it is the love of one's enemies that assures the integrity of Christian morality and distinguishes it from merely ethical morality. This passage is echoed also in Romans 12:17-21. (JBC)

The word rendered "perfect" is frequently used in Greek to refer to the gods. It has much the same scope as the English word "perfect," and in addition can refer to a "full-grown" man (Ephesians 4:13) or to the member of a Gnostic sect. When Jesus says that his followers must be perfect, he probably does not expect that they will be absolutely flawless. "Straight" or "square" would be more accurate, and the sense is given by Genesis 6:9; Job 1:1; James 1:4; and especially Deuteronomy 18:13 on which it has been remarked that "you must be honest with him [Yahweh], upright and sincere, having wholeness and integrity, not double-dealing." In other words, the religious man's attitude toward other men must be like that of God: candid, sincere, constant, not turned

aside toward vengeance no matter how great the provocation. The parallel, Luke 6:36, "be merciful," does not cover so broad a field. (IB)

"perfect" -- The word comes from one meaning end, goal, limit. Here it is the goal set before us, the absolute standard of our Heavenly Father. The word is used also for relative perfection as of adults compared with children. (INT--Robinson)

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36. Read Luke 6:27-36 entirely through one time.

(1) Matthew 5:38-48

37. Read Luke 6:27

(1) Proverbs 25:21

(2) Romans 12:20-21

38. Read Luke 6:28

(1) Romans 12:14

(3) I Peter 3:9

39. Read Luke 6:29-30

(1) No reference

40. Read Luke 6:31

(1) Matthew 7:12

41. Read Luke 6:32-33

(1) No reference

42. Read Luke 6:34

(1) Deuteronomy 15:7-8

43. Read Luke 6:35

(1) Leviticus 25:35-36

44. Read Luke 6:36

(1) No reference

Luke 6:27-36

27 "But to you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,

28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

29 To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic.

30 Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back.

31 Do to others as you would have them do to you.

32 For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them.

33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even

- sinner do the same.
- 34 If you lend money to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit (is) that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, and get back the same amount.
- 35 But rather, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.
- 36 Be merciful, just as (also) your Father is merciful.

Overview from JBC:

Luke has a different arrangement and at times a more expansive presentation than Matthew. Luke shows a marked similarity to Romans 12:14; I Corinthians 4:12, and I John 3:16-18.

Verses 27-28:

“Love your enemies” is not a sentiment. It is a strategy to combat attitude, utterance, and act. (IB)

Verse 27:

love your enemies -- Followers of Jesus must love others to an heroic degree and so become with Jesus “children of the Most High (verse 35), manifesting the life of God among mankind. (JBC)

“but I say unto you that hear” -- This is the only one of the many examples given by Matthew 5:1ff. of the sharp antithesis between what the rabbis taught and what Jesus said. Perhaps that contrast is referred to by Luke. If necessary, could be as in II Corinthians 7:11. See Matthew 5:43. Love of enemies is in the OT, but Jesus ennoble the word, and uses it of love for one’s enemies. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 28:

who curse you -- The Greek word implies spite, jealousy, and bad will. (JBC)

Verse 31:

Some versions read: “so do to them.” The golden rule is found in a negative form in Tobit 4:15, Philo, Confucius, and in a Talmudic tractate. Jesus gives the supreme example of it to his followers and expects the same heroic charity from them. (JBC)

In a different context and relative order in Matthew’s sermon (Matthew 7:12). Luke omits the statement that “the Golden Rule” is the quintessence of Scripture. A non-Jew once offered to become a proselyte if Hillel (ca. 20 B.C.) could teach him the law while he stood on one leg. The rabbi said to him: “What you do not like, do not to your neighbor. That is the entire law, and all the rest is commentary.” A negative version of the maxim is credited to Confucius. (IB)

Verses 32-33:

Where Matthew identifies the wrongdoers as “publicans and Gentiles,” Luke more tactfully refers to “sinners.” (JBC)

Verse 33:

“even sinners” -- Even the sinners, the article distinguishing the class. Matthew 5:46 has “even the publicans” and Matthew 5:47 “even the Gentiles”. That completes the list of the outcasts for “sinners” includes “harlots” and all the rest. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 32-34:

Three examples show that mere reciprocity is not an adequate ethic for Jesus’

followers. "Credit;" that is, "in the sight of God." "Sinners" is a generalization of Matthew's "tax collectors." Verse 34 intrudes the motif of lending that had been omitted in the parallel to Matthew 5:42 (verse 30)--another indication that Luke has reworked his material. "From whom you hope to receive"; that is, who will repay." (IB)

Verse 34:

"If ye lend" -- to lend for interest in a business transaction (to lend and Matthew 5:42 to borrow and nowhere else in the NT). To receive again as much -- to get back in full. Literally here, "that they may get back the equal" (principle and interest, apparently). It could mean "equivalent services." No parallel in Matthew. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 35:

It is difficult to explain why Luke lacks an equivalent to Matthew 5:45, which is so typical of his own Gospel: "Who makes the sun to rise upon the wicked and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust." If Luke had had the present edition of Matthew before him, he certainly would have included the saying. (JBC)

"kind". The Greek word implies tenderness, liberality, and amiability. (JBC)

"expecting nothing in return" is a translation that is based on the rendering in the Vulgate. This is the only occurrence in the NT of the verb that is involved. Elsewhere it always means "despairing." Therefore, one scholar translates it as: "never despairing." The medieval church interpreted the phrase as prohibiting the collection of interest on loans. Verse 35b looks like a prosaic abbreviation of the saying in Matthew 5:45 (the sun and the rain). Jesus' ethic is not based on any calculation that it will convert "enemies" into friends or overcome evil with good (contrast Paul's teaching in Romans 12:20-21). It is an imitation of God's generosity. (IB)

"despairing of no man." On the strength of it Popes and councils have repeatedly condemned the taking of any interest whatever for loans. As loans could not be had without interests, the Christians were forbidden to take it, money lending passed into the hands of the Jews, and added greatly to the unnatural detestation in which Jews were held. By "never despairing" or "giving up nothing in despair" Jesus means that we are not to despair about getting the money back. We are to help the apparently hopeless cases. "Sons of the Most High" -- In Luke 1:32 Jesus is called "Son of the Highest" and here all real children or sons of God (Luke 20:36) are so termed. "Toward the unthankful and evil" -- God the Father is kind towards the unkind and wicked. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 36:

"be merciful" -- Matthew reads "be perfect." In the OT, mercy is attributed to God, rarely to men, while perfection is a goal to be sought by men. (JBC)

"Even as your Father" -- the perfection of the Father is placed as the goal before his children. In neither case is it said that they have reached it. (INT--Robinson)

Session 10

(10) TEACHING ABOUT ALMSGIVING

Matthew 6:1-4

1. Read Matthew 6:1-4 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference
2. Read Matthew 6:1
(1) Matthew 23:5
3. Read Matthew 6:2
(1) John 12:43
4. Read Matthew 6:3-4
(1) No reference

Matthew 6:1-4

- 1 "(But) take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father.
- 2 When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.
- 3 But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing,
- 4 so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

Overview of verses 1-18 from JBC:

This passage expands the idea of Christian righteousness as contrasted with the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (5:20). Righteousness is illustrated by three basic acts of Jewish piety: almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. In each instance an antithesis is drawn between the spurious piety of display and genuine piety, which seeks to conceal itself. The ideal of this passage lacks a certain harmony with that of 5:14-16 -- an inconsistency not so much in the text as in the situation. Works of piety should not be done for vain display, but they should have the force of good example. If they stem from the proper motive, they will be seen -- a city set on a mountain cannot be hidden.

Verse 1:

righteousness -- In later biblical literature and extrabiblical Jewish writings this became the technical term for almsgiving; and the word may have this force here, although this is not the usual meaning of the word in Matthew. The language in which vain display is repudiated is unusually vigorous. (KBC)

Jesus takes it for granted that his followers will do religious acts, but they must be performed with a pure motive and without ostentation. There is very little in this section which is foreign to the best thought of Judaism. Jesus was not so much interested

in remodeling institutions as in transforming minds and attitudes of consciousness of the reality, power, and omnipresence of God. Worship is simply meaningless unless it is performed solely for his sake and the sake of his kingdom. At the same time, a profound acceptance of this principle inevitably leads men to criticize and reform the institutions themselves. (IB)

“Take heed” -- The Greek idiom includes “mind” (noun) which is often expressed in ancient Greek and once in the Septuagint (Job 7:17). It means to “hold the mind on a matter”, take pains, take heed. “Righteousness” is the correct text in this verse. Three specimens of the Pharisaic “righteousness” are given (alms, prayer, and fasting). “To be seen” -- Our word theatrical is this very word, spectacular performance. “With your Father” -- literally, “beside your Father,” standing by his side, as he looks at it. (INT-- Robinson)

Verse 2:

hypocrites -- This word originally meant “actor,” and this meaning may be echoed here; the word “to be seen” used in 6:1 is the Greek verb related to the noun theater. To be hailed as a virtuous man is a sufficient reward for those who seek recognition; they obtain what they seek, and that is all they obtain. (JBC)

“Alms” was an exceedingly important feature of Jewish piety. Tobit 12:8-9 says: “Good prayer with fasting and alms and righteousness ... for alms rescues from death and it will cleanse from all sin.” “Sound no trumpet” is probably a metaphor, like our colloquial “Don’t blow your own horn.” Matthew may have in mind an actual Jewish custom, whether Jesus did or not. The community’s poor were supported by a graduated tax, which was supplemented by freewill offerings collected in synagogues and schools. Trumpets were sounded during public fasts in times of drought and there were prayers in the street. It may well be that collections for the poor were made at these public fasts. The trumpet helped to call attention to acts of generosity. The “hypocrites” of the Gospel no doubt include those who pretend to be more pious than they are, but the sayings of Jesus which contain the word usually seem to point to the incongruity of behavior, straining out the gnat and swallowing the camel, concerned for the mote and ignoring the beam. In other words, inconsistency and discrepancy. The classical meaning of the Greek word is “actor in a play.” The corresponding Aramaic word means “a profane person.” A second-century rabbi remarked acidly that: there are ten portions of hypocrisy in the world, and nine of them are in Jerusalem.” “They have” already received “their reward” -- namely the praise of men -- and God is quits with them. The verb is used in papyrus receipts as a formula: “Received of ...” Jewish theology assumed that one who receives his reward now will not be rewarded in the age to come. There are parallels in rabbinical writings. Glory was more frankly and openly sought in the ancient world, whereas Christians at least pay lip service to modesty and humility. (IB)

“Sound not a trumpet” -- Is this literal or metaphorical? No actual instance of such conduct has been found in the Jewish writings. It has been suggested that it may refer to the blowing of trumpets in the streets on the occasion of public fasts. It has also been suggested that it may refer to the thirteen trumpet-shaped chests of the temple treasury to receive contributions (Luke 21:2). A visitor from India stated that he had seen Hindu priests do precisely this very thing to get a crowd to see their generosity. So it looks as if the rabbis could do it also. Certainly it was in keeping with their love of

praise. And Jesus expressly says that “the hypocrites” do this very thing. This is an old word for actor, interpreter, and one who personates another. Then to pretend, to feign, to dissemble, to act the hypocrite, to wear a mask. This is the hardest word that Jesus has for any class of people and he employs it for these pious pretenders who pose as perfect. “They have received their reward” -- This verb is common in the papyri for receiving a receipt, “they have their receipt in full”, all the reward that they will get, this public notoriety. See Luke 6:5. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 3:

Even your most intimate friend must not know of your generosity. (IB)

Verse 4:

“Your Father who sees in secret” -- The Mishnah teaches that he who profanes the name of God in secret will be punished openly; but he who studies the Torah in secret will be proclaimed to the people. (IB)

“In secret” -- Jesus does not promise a public reward for private piety. (INT--Robinson)

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(11) TEACHING ABOUT PRAYER

Matthew 6:5-8

5. Read Matthew 6:5-8 entirely through one time.

(1) No reference

Matthew 6:5-8

- 5 "When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.
- 6 But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.
- 7 In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words.
- 8 Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Overview of verses 5-15 from JBC:

The saying on prayer follows the pattern of the saying on almsgiving. The prayer in public was prayer that was uttered at set times of the day; the devout Jew stopped wherever he was, unless the place was unclean, and recited the proper prayers in a standing position. Moslems also worship in public at prescribed times, and it is regarded as a sign of great devotion to observe this practice.

Verse 5:

“Standing” was the most usual posture for prayer in Jewish, Christian, and pagan antiquity. At the time of the daily offering there were public prayers in the temple, and people would join in prayer no matter where they happened to be, as Moslems do at the prayer hours or Catholics at the Angelus. (IB)

“In the synagogues and in the corners of streets” -- These were the usual places of prayer (synagogues) and the street corners where crowds stopped for business or talk. If the hour of prayer overtook a Pharisee here, he would strike his attitude of prayer like a modern Moslem that men might see that he was pious. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 6:

[go to your inner room](#) -- or, as in another version, “retire to your room”. In a phrase borrowed from Isaiah 26:20, quoted according to the LXX, the saying recommends that one retire to one’s private chamber even to recite the scheduled prayer. Prayer said when one is not being observed is surely prompted by the proper motive. The saying does not refer to public common prayer in the temple or the synagogue. (JBC)

Jesus does not condemn public worship (5:24; Luke 18:9-14); but one who engages in common prayer must be as free of self-consciousness as if he had gone into his room and shut the door. Prayer is a direct personal relationship with a “Father” God, and an attitude of play-acting destroys its spirit. This attitude is similar to that of the rabbis. (IB)

“into thy closet” -- It is a storehouse, a separate apartment, one’s private chamber, closet, or “den” where he can withdraw from the world and shut the world out and commune with God. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 7:

[do not babble like the pagans](#) -- “Do not heap up empty phrases” is another interpretation. The Greek verb means “to babble.” Although Jewish prayer was often filled with honorific phrases, as in the Kaddish, and was often long (II Chronicles 6:14-42; Daniel 9:4-19), there are rabbinical sayings which counsel brief prayer. Jesus condemns the theory that if fifteen minutes of prayer is good, a half-hour is twice as good; it reminds one of heathenism, with its magical texts. Seneca referred to those who “tire out the gods.” (IB)

“Use not vain repetitions” -- Used of stammerers who repeat the words, then mere babbling or chattering, empty repetition. It is probably similar to the word “babble.” The worshippers of Baal on Mount Carmel (I Kings 8:26) and of Diana in the amphitheater at Ephesus who yelled for two hours (Acts 19:34) are examples. The Mohammedans may also be cited who seem to think that they “will be heard for their much speaking.” The Syriac Sinaitic has it: “Do not be saying idle things.” Certainly Jesus does not mean to condemn all repetition in prayer since he himself prayed three times in Gethsemane “saying the same words again” (Matthew 26:44). “As the Gentiles do”, says Jesus. The pagans thought that by endless repetitions and many words they would inform their gods as to their needs and weary them into granting their requests. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 8:

God does not need to be informed, as though he were unconscious of man’s needs, nor does one have to wheedle whim into action, as heathen worshipers attempted to do. On the other hand, Jesus teaches confident, loving persistence in prayer, as in 7:11, and especially Luke 18:1-7. (IB)

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(12) THE LORD'S PRAYER

Matthew 6:9-15

6. Read Matthew 6:9-15 entirely through one time.
(1) Luke 11:2-4
7. Read Matthew 6:9
(1) No reference
8. Read Matthew 6:10
(1) Matthew 26:42
9. Read Matthew 6:11
(1) Proverbs 30:8-9
10. Read Matthew 6:12
(1) Sirach 28:2 (2) Matthew 18:21-22
11. Read Matthew 6:13
(1) John 17:15 (2) II Thessalonians 3:3
12. Read Matthew 6:14
(1) Sirach 28:1-5 (3) Mark 11:25
(2) Matthew 18:35
13. Read Matthew 6:15
(1) James 2:13

Matthew 6:9-15

- 9 "This is how you are to pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
- 10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
- 11 Give us today our daily bread;
- 12 and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;
- 13 and do not subject us to the final test, but deliver us from the evil one.
- 14 If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you.
- 15 But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.

Overview on verses 7-15 from JBC:

These verses interrupt the pattern and are placed here under a loose topical arrangement. The Lord's Prayer in Luke 11:2-4 is given in answer to a request from the disciples for instruction in prayer, and this is no doubt the original context of the prayer in Q. The Lord's Prayer is contrasted in 6:7-8 not with Jewish prayer but with pagan prayer, which is dismissed as "babbling." There may be an allusion to the long and tedious magical formulas in which meaningless epithets are piled up. The saying is not

sympathetic to long prayers, however, of which Judaism of NT presents numerous examples. The lengthy recital of one's needs is discouraged on the ground that God does not need to be informed of them. The Lord's prayer in Luke has a shorter invocation and six petitions against Matthew's seven. Luke omits the third petition in Matthew.

Overview of verses 9-15 from IB:

It is not certain whether Matthew's form of the prayer comes from Q, as Luke 11:2-4 probably does, or from M. The form in Luke is nearer the original; and it has been shown to consist basically of three petitions: (1) for the coming of the kingdom, (2) for daily bread; that is, all that is needed for earthly existence, and (3) for the forgiveness of sins in the past and the future. These sum up all the needs of those who, as in the beatitudes, await the coming of the kingdom. Matthew's prayer may have been developed out of this into a sevenfold form designed for public worship; the first three petitions (verse 9-10) are centered in God, the other four (verses 11-13) in our needs. *Didache* 8:2 contains Matthew's version with slight variations and with the doxology (verse 13b) appended, and commands Christians to say it three times a day. Jesus' disciples no doubt employed the prayer in their common worship from the beginning, but Jesus' primary purpose was to furnish an example of what true prayer is like (verse 9). The prayer is thoroughly Jewish and nearly every phrase is paralleled in the Kaddish and the Eighteen Benedictions of Jews; thus it is Jesus' inspired and original summary of his own people's piety at its best.

Verse 9:

Father in heaven -- A common phrase of Matthew (5:45; 7:21; 12:50). The first three petitions are really synonymous; they express the desire for the eschatological realization of the reign. (JBC)

hallowed be your name -- This occurs when it is recognized as holy and confessed to be holy by men. The coming of the reign is the effective actualization of the will of God "on earth as in heaven," where God's supremacy is not questioned. (JBC)

"Hallowed be thy name" means approximately the same as "Father, glorify thy name" (John 12:28), but here the passive form is used, as in the Kaddish, to avoid a direct imperative. God is asked to sanctify his name and to cause men to sanctify it. The sanctification of the name is a rich and many-sided concept in Jewish thought. God sanctifies his name by condemning and opposing sin, by separating Israel from the world and giving it his commandments and his love and grace. It is also Israel's task to sanctify God's name by sanctifying itself, in keeping his commandments and doing all other things which redound to his glory. God's name will be fully sanctified in the age to come, when everything that opposes his will has been removed and punishment is no longer necessary. (IB)

Luke's prayer begins "Father." The simple "Abba" must have been Jesus' usual address to God (Mark 14:36; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6), but it can also be translated "our Father," which is a frequent address to God in Jewish prayer. The phrase "who art in heaven" is sometimes added in synagogue prayers, but it is found more frequently in rabbinical teachings than in prayers. God is frequently referred to (Deuteronomy 32:6) or addressed (Isaiah 63:16; Ecclesiasticus 23:1, 4) as father of Israel or of an individual Israelite (Wisdom 2:16; Ecclesiasticus 51:10), and the term is used once in a pre-Christian writing as a substitute for the name of God. Only occasionally does a Jew

address God as “my Father” (Ecclesiasticus 23:1, 4; Wisdom 2:16) and the rabbis regarded this as appropriate only on the lips of a saint. Other religions often speak of the deity as father. The meaning of such a symbolic word depends on the total religious and cultural context in which it is spoken. It is difficult to define exactly how Jesus’ use of it differs from that of the best of his contemporaries. Perhaps the difference is that when he speaks of God as Father, he uses the word with profound and loving intimacy. He consistently thinks of religious relationships in terms of family life. (IB)

“after this manner therefore pray ye” -- “you” expressed in contrast with “the Gentiles.” It should be called “The Model Prayer” rather than “The Lord’s Prayer”. “Thus” pray as he gives them a model. He himself did not use it as a liturgy (cf. John 17:1). There is no evidence that Jesus meant it for liturgical use by others. In Luke 11:2-4 practically the same prayer although briefer is given at a later time by Jesus to the apostles in response to a request that he teach them how to pray. It has been argued that the form in Luke is the original to which Matthew has made additions, explaining that the tendency of liturgical formulas is towards enrichment rather than abbreviation. There is no evidence whatsoever that Jesus designed it as a set formula. There is good and not harm in children learning and saying this noble prayer. Some people are disturbed over the words “Our Father” and say that no has a right to call God Father until he is converted which is an absurd contradiction. God is the Father of all men in one sense. The recognition of Him as the Father in the full sense is the first step in coming back him in regeneration and conversion. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 10:

your kingdom come -- As in the Kaddish this petition follows the prayer for sanctification of the name. As this concept is two-sided, so is the prayer. God is asked to exercise his kingship and to cause men to take the yoke of the kingdom upon themselves (11:29). Rabbinical writings usually refer to the “revealing” or “appearance” of God’s kingdom instead of its “coming.” “Thy will be done” is not found in Luke. It is an early and accurate gloss. Where God’s will is done, there his sovereignty is acknowledged and effective. (IB)

Verse 11:

daily -- The Greek word traditionally translated “daily” is of uncertain meaning. It does not appear in any Greek literature before the Gospels, and the etymology is uncertain. “Daily” is a very probable rendering. The word seems to designate the bread of the coming day, and the petition is thus related to the sayings against excessive solitude (6:31-33). However, the question has been raised concerning whether or not the petition refers to the Messianic banquet instead. This is also in harmony with 6:31-33; for the petition is then not directed even to the simple provision of daily basic needs, but to the ultimate realization of the reign in which basic daily needs cease to exist. In this interpretation the fourth petition belongs with the first three. (JBC)

The word translated “daily” is not found in Greek writings independent of Christian literature, except for one occurrence in a single papyrus, and its meaning and derivation have never been satisfactorily explained. Various suggestions have been made: (1) “necessary [for life],” so Chrysostom, Cyril of Jerusalem, and the Syriac Peshitta and Arabic versions; (2) “steadfast, faithful,” so the Sinaitic Syriac (of Luke) and the Curetonian Syriac; (3) “daily” or “for the day in question” from the O.L.; (4) “for the

tomorrow” or “for the future”, Cyril of Alexandria, and the Gospel According to the Hebrews. The third and fourth are the most likely possibilities. The papyrus, where the word is found, may be from the fifth century A.D. It is a leaf from a cook’s household account book, and the word occurs as the first of the items for the fifteenth day. Here the most natural translation is “for the day’s expenses [not otherwise tabulated]” or “for various everyday items.” The teaching of 6:34 also speaks in favor of “daily.” Probably the term was not understood by Matthew’s and Luke’s readers; hence the evangelists feel the need of adding an explanatory phrase; “this day”, in the case of Matthew; and “each day” in the case of Luke. (IB)

“our daily bread” -- the adjective “daily” coming after “Give us this day” has given expositors a great deal of trouble. Origen said it was made by the Evangelists Matthew and Luke to reproduce the idea of an Aramaic original. It has been maintained that the papyri has shed no clear light upon this difficult word (Matthew 6:11; Luke 11:3), which was in all probability a new coinage by the author of the Greek Q to render his Aramaic Original. It has also been claimed that only about fifty purely New Testament or “Christian” words can be admitted out of the more than 5,000 used. But when a word is not recognizable at sight as a Jewish or Christian new formation, we must consider it as an ordinary Greek word until the contrary is proven. It has all the appearance of a word that originated in trade and traffic of the everyday life of the people, which has been confirmed by others when it was found in an ancient housekeeping book. So then it is not a word coined by the Evangelist or by Q to express an Aramaic original. The word occurs also in three late manuscripts, after II Maccabees 1:8. The meaning, in view of the kindred participle in Acts 16:12, seems to be “for the coming day,” a daily prayer for the needs of the next day. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 12:

our debts -- The fifth petition is a prayer for the forgiveness of them. Luke has “sins,” an easier word for non-Jewish readers. The condition of forgiveness is that one has forgiven. (JBC)

“our debts” -- Luke (11:4) has “sins.” In the ancient Greek “debt” is common for actual legal debts as in Romans 4:4, but here it is used of moral and spiritual debts to God. “Trespases” is a mistranslation made common by the Church of England Prayer Book. It is correct in the Epistle to the Romans in Christ’s argument about prayer, but it is not in the Model Prayer itself. See Matthew 18:28, 30 for sin pictured again by Christ as debt and the sinner as debtor. WE are thus described as having wronged God. The word for moral obligation was once supposed to be peculiar to the NT. But it is common in that sense in the papyri. We ask forgiveness “in proportion as” we also have forgiven those in debt to us, a most solemn reflection. It means to send away, to dismiss, to wipe off. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 13:

do not subject us to the final test -- or, “lead us not into temptation.” This petition probably does not refer to the daily encounter with evil; Matthew would no doubt agree with Paul that God can give an escape from temptation (I Corinthians 10:13). The eschatological tone of the prayer suggests that the temptation meant is the great eschatological test, of which Mathew says (24:22) that no one could bear it unless it were abbreviated. (JBC)

“Debts” is a Jewish figure for “sins,” which is well illustrated by 18:23-35. He who sins is under special obligation to make amends and is not free until he has fulfilled that obligation. Those who use this prayer do not presume to ask forgiveness save in so far as they have forgiven others (cf. Ecclesiasticus 28:2). (IB)

deliver us from the evil one -- or, “deliver us from evil”. Similarly, the eschatological catastrophe is very probably “the evil” from which the Christian prays to be delivered in the final petition. The ambiguity of “evil” and “the evil one” is found here, as it also was in 5:37, 39. (JBC)

“And bring us not into temptation” -- “Bring” or “lead” bothers many people. It seems to present God as an active agent in subjecting us to temptation, a thing specifically denied in James 1:13. The word here translated “temptation” means originally “trial” or “test” as in James 1:2. But God does test or sift us, although he does not tempt us to evil. No one understood temptation so well as Jesus for the devil tempted him by every avenue of approach to all kinds of sin, but without success. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus said to Peter, James, and John: “Pray that ye enter not into temptation” (Luke 22:40). That is the idea here. The idea is “Do not allow us to be led into temptation.” There is a way out (I Corinthians 10:13), but it is a terrible risk. (INT--Robinson)

“from the evil one” -- We have no way of knowing it is the evil one or the evil thing. It may refer either to the devil as the Evil One par excellence or the evil man whoever he may be who seeks to do us ill. It reflects the idea either that work is bad or that this particular work is bad and so the bad idea drives out the good in work or toil, an example of human depravity surely. (INT--Robinson)

A doxology, “for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen” is found in many Greek manuscripts. The presence of a similar doxology in the *Didache* (8:2), a work written before 100 A.D., suggests that the doxology is a very early expansion. It was normal in Judaism to conclude prayers with a formal doxology, and the early Christian communities often followed the Jewish practice. The doxology, however, is not found in the most reliable manuscripts. It has been used in the Protestant churches. It is sheer accident that it did not appear in the Greek manuscripts that Jerome used in translating the Vulgate. (JBC)

The doxology is not found in the oldest and best Greek manuscripts. The earliest forms vary very much, some shorter, some longer than the one we find here. The use of a doxology arose when this prayer began to be used as a liturgy to be recited or to be chanted in public worship. It was not an original part of the Model Prayer as given by Jesus. (INT--Robinson)

The word rendered “temptation” might mean “trial” or “persecution”, but the petition is usually taken as a request that God remove occasions of sin or the evil impulse which prompts sin. God’s omnipotence and providence are, as always, assumed; but there is no reflection on the question raised by James 1:13-14: “Does God tempt man?” The clause “but deliver us from evil”, not found in Luke, may be Matthew’s gloss, which stands in poetic parallelism to the previous petition; if so, it probably does not mean “from the Evil One,” which is another possible translation. “For thine is the kingdom ... Amen” is a doxology added in the later manuscripts to round the prayer out liturgically. Except for the words “the kingdom and” it is found in the *Didache* version. The source of

the doxology may be I Chronicles 29:11. A briefer formula is found in II Timothy 4:18. (IB)

Verse 14:

“trespasses” -- This is not part of the Model Prayer. The word “trespass” is literally “falling to one side”, a lapse or deviation from truth or uprightness. The ancients sometimes used it of intentional falling or attack upon one’s enemy, but “slip” or “fault” (Galatians 6:1) is the common NT idea. In Romans 5:14 it is a positive violation, a transgression, conscious stepping aside or across. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 14-15:

These verses are a commentary on the fifth petition, emphasizing the duty of forgiveness as a condition of receiving forgiveness. The passage is very loosely parallel to Mark 11:25-26. See 5:23-26 and 18:35. (JBC)

Similar teachings are given in Mark 11:25-26 and especially in Matthew 18:23-35; also Ecclesiasticus 28:1-2. (IB)

(13) TEACHING ABOUT FASTING

Matthew 6:16-18

14. Read Matthew 6:16-18 entirely through one time.

(1) No reference

Matthew 6:16-18

- 16 "When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.
- 17 But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,
- 18 so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.

Overview of verses 16-18 from IB:

According to 9:14-15 (=Mark 2:18-20) and 11:18-19 (=Luke 7:33-34), Jesus and his disciples were conspicuous because they fasted seldom, if at all. This passage, even though it presupposes fasting, collides directly with Jewish custom. Anointing was a symbol of joy, and therefore forbidden on the day of Atonement, and other days of fasting and mourning. Jesus would have his disciples, even at the risk of criticism avoid the conventional display of humility.

Verse 16:

When you fast -- In the early books of the OT, fasting appears as a token of mourning or of repentance. No fast is prescribed in the Law except for the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29; 23:27; Numbers 29:7). A fast meant abstinence from food for the entire day from sunrise to sunset. Fasting twice a week was regarded in the NT times as a sign of devotion. (JBC)

They neglect their appearance -- Or, “they disfigure their faces”. The disfigurement was a part of the ritual of grief or mourning in the ancient world;

“sackcloth and ashes” were put on to make the person unsightly. These are rejected as a mere external display. The disciple who fasts should wash and anoint himself; washing and anointing were preparations for a banquet, not signs of grief and affliction (see 9:14-15). (JBC)

“They disfigure their faces”, probably by leaving them unwashed. Those who fast for God’s sake receive beauty of face. (IB)

“of a sad countenance” -- Only here and Luke 24:17 in the NT. It is compound of sullen and countenance. These actors or hypocrites put on a gloomy look and, if necessary, even disfigure their faces, that they may look like they are fasting. It is this pretence of piety that Jesus so sharply ridicules. They conceal their real looks that they may seem to be fasting conscious and pretentious hypocrisy. (INT--Robinson)

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(14) TREASURE IN HEAVEN

Matthew 6:19-21

15. Read Matthew 6:19-21 entirely through one time.

(1) No reference

16. Read Matthew 6:19

(1) James 5:2-3

17. Read Matthew 6:20-21

(1) Luke 12:33-34

Matthew 6:19-21

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal.

20 But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal.

21 For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.

Overview of verses 19-34 from JBC:

This collection of sayings, which are found in scattered contexts in Luke, have as a common theme singleness of purpose. The disciple should attend exclusively to the service of God and should not permit himself to be distracted from the concentration even by what men think are legitimate cares. The paradoxical tone of the sermon is maintained in these sayings.

Overview of verses 19-21 from IB:

These verses are apparently in poetic form and constitute a kind of proverb. Luke 12:33 erects the saying into a general command to the disciples to sell their property and give alms, probably in view of the end of the age (cf. Acts 2:45; 4:34-37).

Verse 19:

decay -- Or “rust.” Since “rust” means “eating”, it is often taken to mean “the

worm”; that is, “the eater.” The word is also used by Galen in the sense of “rotting, putrefaction”; cf. Hosea 5:12, where moth and rottenness are coupled. In either case, rust like the moth attacks wealth in the form of rugs or expensive garments. If we translate “rust,” we should think of tools of iron. Thieves “break through” by digging through the mud or plaster wall of a Palestinian house. (IB)

Verses 19-21:

The Palestinian archaeologist sometimes finds hoards of coins in the remains of ancient houses. More frequently he finds only traces of such hoards. The ancient peasant or laborer had very little opportunity to use hard money; and when it came into his hands, his instinct was to bury his little store of coins at times of political disadvantage: and there was always the danger of thieves or robbers (6:19). The saying tells the disciples that no lasting treasure can be stored on earth. The stores of the peasant often included costly garments, which were saved for special occasions. These will be eaten by moths. “Rust” is literally “eating,” any type of corrosion. (JBC)

Verse 20:

treasures in heaven -- This metaphor is in the same line with the “wages” mentioned in the preceding examples of true righteousness (6:1, 4, 6). Only righteousness achieves anything of lasting value; and what a man thinks has lasting value determines where his intentions and interests lie. (JBC)

break in and steal -- Or, “dig through and steal”. This could be done by thieves in a house of mud bricks, no longer the prevalent building material in modern Palestine, where stone is now commonly used. There are other references to mud-brick houses; see 7:26-27. (JBC)

Parallels to this verse are found elsewhere (Tobit 4:9). “He who does righteousness lays up life for himself with the Lord.” “Do righteousness, my sons, on earth, that you may have treasure in heaven.” (IB)

Verse 21:

This may have originally been a piece of secular wisdom. “A man’s real interests are where his investments are.” “If you want to get a man interested in something, get him to put his money into it.” Here it may mean: “If you act in this way, your whole inner disposition will increasingly be turned in the right direction.” (IB)

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(15) THE LIGHT OF THE BODY

Matthew 6:22-23

18. Read Matthew 6:22-23 entirely through one time.
(1) Luke 11:34-36

Matthew 6:22-23

- 22 "The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is sound, your whole body will be filled with light;
23 but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be in darkness. And if the light in you is

Verse 22:

The lamp of the body is the eye -- Or, “the eye is the lamp of the body”. In a naïve physiological conception the eye is the aperture through which light is admitted. The eye should be simple, which means healthy; the Hebrew or Aram background is not certain, but this is the most probable meaning of the word. The healthy eye illuminates the whole inner man. The “evil” or wicked, eye is here the diseased eye; if the very principle of light is darkened, then the whole inner man is in total darkness. The force of the metaphor is somewhat obscure both in Matthew and in Luke. The “evil eye” is usually envy; and the original saying seems to have been directed against this vice. By inserting it in the present context Matthew has turned it to an image of simplicity of intention; this is the clarity of vision by which one seeks true treasure and serves only one master. (JBC)

“The eye is the lamp of the body”; as in 5:15, the figure is that of the one-room Palestinian house. Philo expresses the thought that the eye is to the body that which reason is to the soul. “Sound” is better than the more literal “single.” It means much the same as “perfect” in 5:48. The man has been described as one who walks with “singleness of eye”, never coveting or meddling in his neighbor’s affairs, but doing good in simplicity of spirit. The “eye” is thus the spirit of man, his moral and religious faculty. (IB)

“single”--Used of a marriage contract when the husband is to repay the dowry pure and simple, if she is set free; but in case he does not do so promptly, he is to add interest also. There are various instances of such usage. Here and in Luke 11:34 the eye is called “single” in a moral sense. The word means “without folds” like a piece of cloth unfolded. Confusion may result from this verse due to the fact that the eye, besides being the organ of vision, is the seat of expression, revealing inward dispositions. If our eyes are healthy we see clearly with a single focus (without astigmatism). If the eyes are diseased (bad, evil), they may even be cross-eyed or cock-eyed. We see double and confuse our vision. We keep one eye on the hoarded treasures of earth and roll the other proudly up to heaven. Seeing double is double-mindedness. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 23:

The “evil” eye, in Jewish speech, denotes a grudging, selfish character (cf. 20:15); therefore it has been paraphrased: “The door to the body is the hand; he whose charity is open-handed ... but when the hand is closed, ...” This is the most natural interpretation of the proverb in the present context. Thus the final clause would mean, “If the spirit which guides your actions is selfish, how selfish your total personality must be!” But if verses 22-23 were detached, their reference would be wider. “You think your moral faculties are a guide to life, but if they are actually darkness, how completely dark you are!” (IB)

(16) GOD AND MONEY

Matthew 6:24

19. Read Matthew 6:24
(1) Luke 16:13

Matthew 6:24

- 24 "No one can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

This saying continues the common theme. The disciple cannot have a divided loyalty. (JBC)

mammon -- Personified in opposition to God, it is found in the Talmud to designate not only money, but possessions in general. Taken together with 6:19-21 and the following passage, the radical character of the teaching of Jesus on wealth and ownership begins to emerge. Material possessions are a false god that demands exclusive loyalty, as God demands it. The claims of material possessions must be totally repudiated. (JBC)

The verse has three parts: **No one can serve two masters**, even though a slave might legally be the property of two owners. Perhaps this is originally a secular proverb like the Oriental saying: "No one can carry two melons in one hand"; and there are many other parallels in Plato, Philo, and others. The conclusion of this first part is the third, **You cannot serve God and mammon**. "Mammon" is simply the word for property and is not always used in an evil sense. It is found in the Hebrew text of Ecclesiasticus 31:8, the Targums, and elsewhere: "Let the property of your associate be dear to you as your own." The middle clause is explanatory, and deals with a situation in which one tries to do the impossible. The "either-or" contrast is probably to be explained thus: "Either he will hate A and love B, or he will be devoted to A and despise B." (IB)

No one can serve two masters -- Many try it, but failure awaits them all. Men even try "to be slaves to God and mammon." Mammon is a Chaldee, Syriac, and Punic word like Plutus for the money-god (or devil). The slave of mammon will obey mammon while pretending to obey God. The United States has had a terrible revelation of the owner of the money-god in public life in the Sinclair Fall Teapot Air Dome Oil case. When the guide is blind and leads the blind, both fall into the ditch. The man who cannot tell road from ditch sees falsely. "He will hold to one" - - The word means to line up face to face (anti-; in opposition) with one man and against the other. (INT--Robinson)

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(17) DEPENDENCE ON GOD

Matthew 6:25-34

20. Read Matthew 6:25-34 entirely through one time.
(1) Luke 12:22-31
21. Read Matthew 6:25
(1) No reference
22. Read Matthew 6:26
(1) Psalm 145:15-16 (2) Psalm 147:9

23. Read Matthew 6:27-34
(1) No reference

Matthew 6:25-34

- 25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat (or drink), or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?
- 26 Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they?
- 27 Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span?
- 28 Why are you anxious about clothes? Learn from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work or spin.
- 29 But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was clothed like one of them.
- 30 If God so clothes the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow, will he not much more provide for you, O you of little faith?
- 31 So do not worry and say, 'What are we to eat?' or 'What are we to drink?' or 'What are we to wear?'
- 32 All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.
- 33 But seek first the kingdom (of God) and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides.
- 34 Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for a day is its own evil.

Overview from JBC:

The radical teaching of Jesus on possessions is expanded and emphasized. **Worry** means "anxious care". It is not to be admitted; it may be worth noting that the word means more than simple thought or planning. Jesus refers to the kind of worry that leads to a divided loyalty and ultimately to an exclusive concentration on possessions. He speaks of the basic needs of food and clothing--the person is more important and deserves more attention than the external goods that sustain him. The example of the birds is proposed as the proper attitude toward food. It has been remarked that this example does not excuse one from earning his food; few men, it is said, work as hard for their living as the average sparrow. The audience to which these sayings were addressed was largely composed of peasants and laborers, and Jesus says nothing here or elsewhere that invites them to abandon their life of incessant grinding toil. It is not indolence he recommends (see II Thessalonians 3:10). What is recommended is that one's anxiety should not exceed the labor that is required to secure sustenance. It is not the use of the necessities of life that is discouraged, but the accumulation of goods. Accumulation of goods does not prolong the life of the owner as much as a cubit (about a 18-20 inches). The spatial and temporal metaphors are mixed in this figure.

Overview from IB:

A man who wishes to store up treasure in heaven (verse 20), to have the guiding principle of his life straight (verse 22), and to serve God rather than property (verse 24), must get free of worry.

Verse 25:

what you will wear -- Or, "what you will put on." For the proper attitude toward clothing, Jesus alludes to the wild flowers, which bloom in profusion on Palestinian hills. These hills are a dull brown color most of the year. The example illustrates the observation of nature and the details of daily life that are typical of the Gospels. Yet this display of bright color, which is indeed an impressive sight, lasts only for a few weeks. (JBC)

do not worry -- Or, "do not be anxious" which is more accurate than "take no thought", for there are times when Jesus counsels prudence (Luke 14:28-32), but "anxious" is still not strong enough. The idea is: "you must not be distracted by cares." It is remarked in Mark 4:19 that "the cares of the world...choke the word." Here Jesus uses the argument "from the light to the heavy," which is so often employed in Jewish teaching. If God has given "life," which is so much "more than food," will he not give the lesser gift of sustenance? At first glance the saying appears to be nothing more than a word of comfort and encouragement; but this is a superficial impression. As almost any pastor can testify, anxiety over daily bread can be paralyzing in its effect on the religious life. It is imperative for the Christian to come to terms with his creaturely existence if he is to know how to pray. He must face the hard fact that his standard of living and his health cannot be made absolutely secure, and learn to trust humbly that God will give him all that is needful. The saying is therefore a commandment, and perhaps the most difficult of all to obey. A fourth-century pagan philosopher said: "For the soul is far superior to the body and the body to possessions." The difference is that Jesus does not share the Greek philosophical idea that the body is unimportant and only the life of mind is significant. (IB)

It has been remarked that this section is crucial for the understanding of Jesus' teaching. It is the pure will of God that his children should be free from anxiety, but they can obey the commandment perfectly only in the kingdom of God: "The passage is to be taken in an absolute sense because it is eschatological." This is no doubt correct thinking in saying that we cannot divest ourselves of anxiety altogether, but, with the help of God's grace, it is possible to make progress in this direction. The Christian is free to imagine that Jesus, at the very moment when he gave this commandment, looked forward to the possibility of his own earthly failure and death. (IB)

Verse 26:

It has been remarked that "the religion of Jesus was not centered about a specifically religious experience. It was rather the religious interpretation of non-specifically religious experience." As in Job (especially chapters 38-41), man is bidden to look at nature to find an answer to his question and problems. The Mishnah has a parallel saying: "Have you ever seen a wild animal or a bird practicing a trade? Yet they have their sustenance without care." (IB)

Verse 27:

This may be an independent saying, connected to the context by the phrase "by being anxious." "One cubit" is the length of the forearm; that is about a foot and a half.

The translation “unto his statue” is a vivid paradox, but few people would desire such an addition to height. A man might want a longer “span of life”, but worry will not add even the length of time in which one can walk another cubit; Psalm 39:5, “Behold, thou hast made my days a few handbreadths.” (IB)

Verses 28-29:

The “lilies of the field” cannot be identified, since the word is used of all the kinds of wild flowers, but it has been suggested that here the scarlet anemone is compared to the royal robes of Solomon whose lavishness was proverbial. (IB)

Verse 29:

Solomon in all his splendor -- The raiment of Solomon, the proverbial example of wealth in the Bible, did not effectively endure much longer. To make the provision of food and clothing one’s major concern, an object of anxiety, is to live like the pagans who know no dedication except to the accumulation of the goods of this world. The disciples have a prior dedication, the reign of God; Matthew adds “its righteousness” (see 5:20), not found in Luke. If the disciples seek this, God will provide the necessities of life to those who work for them. (JBC)

Verse 30:

“Which today is, and tomorrow is [not]” is a common rabbinical phrase. Bread was baked in a preheated oven; dry flowers, grass, and other fuel were tossed in and burned, after which the coals were raked out. (IB)

Verse 32:

A statement of quoted has been cited pertaining to this verse, and illustrating the attitude of the Gentiles toward prayer: “We do not pray to Jupiter to make us good but to give us material benefits... We must pray to God for the gifts of fortune, but wisdom we must acquire for ourselves.” In contrast, other Hellenistic theologians consider thanksgiving the only appropriate prayer to God, while Jesus quite frankly bids his disciples to pray for their daily bread. The true contrast is between the confident reliance on God as exemplified in 6:11; 7:7-11, and the anxious ambition of worldly beings. (IB)

Verse 33:

“His righteousness” -- the saying may originally have read, “its [the kingdom’s] righteousness.” “A man enjoys the reward [of the law] in this world and its whole worth remains for the world to come,” is a rabbinical quotation. Origen transmits an alleged saying of Jesus: “Seek the great things and the little things will be added to you, and seek the heavenly things and the earthly things will be added to you.” (IB)

“First his kingdom” -- This in answer to those who see in the Sermon on the Mount only ethical comments. Jesus in the beatitudes drew the picture of the man with the new heart. Here he places the Kingdom of God and his righteousness between temporal blessings (food and clothing). (INT--Robinson)

Verse 34:

This verse (not found in Luke) emphasizes more clearly the principle that the disciples should not accumulate goods. By a saying paradoxical to modern ears, saving is called anxious care for the morrow; no doubt this is an instance (similar to the legitimization of what was once called usury) of the adaptation of the Gospels to an economics not the same as that in which the Gospels were written. If saving becomes “accumulation,” it is still subject to the words of this passage. (JBC)

Sufficient for a day -- The concluding sentence sounds less like a saying of Jesus than a popular proverb used to illustrate the point at issue. (JBC)

How can “tomorrow ... be anxious for itself”? Perhaps it is playful humor; or “Tomorrow will take care of itself.” The final sentence has rabbinical parallels, and both sayings may originally have been secular proverbs. (IB)

“For the morrow” -- the last resort of the anxious soul when all other fears are allayed. The ghost of tomorrow stalks out with all its hobgoblins of doubt and distrust. (INT--Robinson)

Session 11

(18) JUDGING OTHERS

Matthew 7:1-5

Luke 6:37-42

1. Read Matthew 7:1-5 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference
2. Read Matthew 7:1
(1) Romans 2:1-2 (2) I Corinthians 4:5
3. Read Matthew 7:2
(1) Wisdom 12:22 (2) Mark 4:24
4. Read Matthew 7:3-5
(1) No reference

Matthew 7:1-5

- 1 "Stop judging, that you may not be judged.
- 2 For as you judge, so will you be judged, and the measure with which you measure will be measured out to you.
- 3 Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own eye?
- 4 How can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove that splinter from your eye,' while the wooden beam is in your eye?
- 5 You hypocrite, remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother's eye.

Overview of verses 1-17 from JBC:

The remainder of the Sermon on the Mount has no perceptible unity of theme. Obviously Matthew considered the sayings to be basic. Almost all of them are paralleled in Luke; but only one is paralleled in Mark.

Verse 1:

Stop judging -- Or, "judge not." The meaning of "judge" is not simply to have an opinion--this can scarcely be avoided; the word means to judge harshly, to condemn, and the form in which the saying appears in Luke (6:37-38) makes this explicit. Matthew's briefer statement is probably closer to the original. (JBC)

Stop judging, that you may not be judged -- Or, judge not, that you be not judged;" that is, by God. The principle is found in the Mishnah: "Do not judge your fellow until you are in his position;" "When you judge any man weight the scales in his favor." In Luke 6:37 this saying is combined with commands to be merciful and generous. It is a warning against self-righteous severity, not a command to be neutral toward moral issues. (IB)

"Judge not" -- The habit of censoriousness, sharp, unjust criticism. Our word

critic is from this same word. It means to separate, distinguish, discriminate. That is necessary, but pre-judice (prejudgment) is unfair, captious criticism. (INT--Robinson)
Verse 2:

This saying is found in Mark 4:24 in a different context. It suits Matthew's purpose quite well. Men must judge one another, but they can expect to be called to responsibility for their judgments. By a somewhat popular paradox one who judges others unfairly is apparently threatened with the unfair judgment of God. This is not the intended meaning; harsh judgments will be punished severely, but not unfairly. Luke 6:38 has adapted the saying to a different context; the measure is not the measure of judgment but the measure of generous giving. The name of God is avoided; the threat of judgment is put in the simple passive. (JBC)

For as you judge, so will you be judged -- Or, "for with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged." This is not found in Luke. The principle is contained in the Mishnah: "With what measure a man metes it shall be measured again." Here, as in 6:14-15, it is applied to forgiveness. (IB)

Verse 3:

the wooden beam -- Or, simply "the beam". By a hyperbole the "beam" in one's own eye is contrasted with the "splinter" in another's eye. This may be a popular proverb applied to the Gospel. Acute observation of the faults of others combined with complacency with one's own character is the object to many commonplace proverbs in all languages. This is the attitude of "hypocrites"; the saying is clearly directed against the censoriousness of the scribes and Pharisees. (JBC)

"The mote" -- not dust, but a piece of dried wood or chaff, splinter, speck, a very small particle that may irritate. "The beam" -- A log on which planks in the house rest (so papyri), joist, rafter, plank, pole sticking out grotesquely. Probably a current proverb quoted by Jesus like our people in glass houses throwing stones. An Arabic proverb says: "How seest thou the splinter in thy brother's eye, and seest not the cross--beam in thine eye?" (INT--Robinson)

Verses 3-5:

The word rendered "speck" may be a splinter of wood. "Log" is better than "beam," which to the uninstructed often suggests a beam of light. It is a timber used in building. The figure is purposely grotesque, like the camel and the needle's eye (19:24). Nothing is more absurd than for a man to try to improve others when he does not improve himself. Such a man is a "hypocrite". He may deliberately cover up his own sins by being a reformer, or his helpfulness may have behind it an unconscious defensive desire to criticize. (IB)

Verse 5:

"Shalt thou see clearly" -- Only here and Luke 6:42 and Mark 8:25 in the NT. Look through, penetrate, to gaze at. Get the log out of your eye and you will see clearly how to help the brother get the splinter out of his eye. (INT -- Robinson)

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5. Read Luke 6:37-42
- (1) Matthew 7:1-5

6. Read Luke 6:37
 (1) Matthew 6:14 (2) James 2:13
7. Read Luke 6:38
 (1) Matthew 4:24
8. Read Luke 6:39
 (1) Matthew 15:14 (2) Matthew 23:16-17, 24
9. Read Luke 6:40
 (1) Matthew 10:24-25 (3) John 15:20
 (2) John 13:16
10. Read Luke 6:41-42
 (1) No reference

Luke 6:37-42

- 37 "Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven.
- 38 Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you."
- 39 And he told them a parable, "Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit?
- 40 No disciple is superior to the teacher; but when fully trained, every disciple will be like his teacher.
- 41 Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own?
- 42 How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove that splinter in your eye,' when you do not even notice the wooden beam in your own eye? You hypocrite! Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother's eye.

See Matthew 7:1-5; 15:14; 10:24f. (JBC)

Verse 37:

Constructed with the foregoing in most Greek manuscripts by the conjunction "and." The passive construction in late Jewish literature is sometimes a device for avoiding the use of the divine name, and so most interpreters understand it in this sequence. "Judge not" "that God may not judge you," etc. More probably the sayings are bits of practical Jewish wisdom, comparable to those in the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiasticus. "Do not judge others, and they will not judge you." (IB)

"and judge not" -- forbids the habit of criticism. The common verb, to separate, is found in our English words: critic, criticism, discriminate. Jesus does not mean that we are not to form opinions, but not to form them rashly, unfairly, like our prejudice. "Ye shall not be judged" -- to give judgment against one. Either cease doing or do not have

the habit of doing it. Old verb. “Ye shall not be condemned” -- Censoriousness is a bad habit. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 38:

measure -- The word used in Matthew is a standard of judgment, but in Luke it is the capacity of one's generosity. (JBC)

into your lap -- That is, the fold of a garment that hangs over the belt (Isaiah 65:7). (JBC)

The metaphor is borrowed from the grain trade. “Lap” is perhaps the best that can be done with a word that means a large pocket or fold that overlaps a girdle on a garment. Also used metaphorically in Isaiah 65:6-7; Psalm 79:12; and others. The proverb in 38b has a different application in Mark 4:24b. (IB)

Into your bosom is another translation of “into your lap”. What is meant is that the fold of the wide upper garment bound by the girdle made a pocket in common use, as can be found in Isaiah 65:7. “Shall be measured to you” -- this has the common meaning of in turn or back, measured back to you in requital. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 39:

In Matthew these words are addressed to “scribes and Pharisees” (15:14); but Luke directs them to the disciples who must exercise self-criticism in the example and inspiration of Jesus. (JBC)

The disastrous consequences of judgment for both the judge and the object of his criticism. Matthew used the proverbs to criticize the leadership of the Pharisees (Matthew 15:14; cf. Matthew 23:16). (IB)

“also a parable” -- It is thought by some that the second half of the sermon begins here as indicated by Luke's insertion of “And he spake” at this point. Luke has the word parable some fifteen times both for crisp proverbs and for the longer narrative comparisons. This is the only use of the term parable concerning the metaphors in the Sermon on the Mount. But in both Matthew and Luke's report of the discourse there are some sixteen possible applications of the word. Two come right together: The blind leading the blind, the mote and the beam. Matthew gives the parabolic proverb of the blind leading the blind later (Matthew 15:14). Jesus repeated these sayings on various occasions as every teacher does his characteristic ideas. So Matthew 6:40; 10:24; 12:34; Luke 6:45. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 40:

An absurd saying in its Lukan context. Are blind guides compared to teachers who cannot impart more to their pupils than they themselves know? Matthew adds his version to the account of the mission of the twelve (Matthew 10:24-25), where it means that no disciple can expect a better fate than his master's. (IB)

“the disciple is not above his master” -- literally, a learner (or pupil) is not above the teacher. Precisely so in Matthew 10:24 where “slave” is added with “lord.” But here Luke adds: “But everyone when he is perfected shall be as his master.” -- the state of completion. The word is common in mending broken things or nets (Matthew 4:21) or men (Galatians 6:1). So it is a long process to get the pupil patched up to the plane of his teacher. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 41-42:

splinter ...beam -- Or, “speck...beam.” Frankly hyperbolic. One utter absurdity

is exposed by another. (JBC)

These verses follow immediately upon the prohibition of judgment in Matthew's Gospel. Any useful criticism must begin with self-examination and reform. The "speck" and the "beam", the gnat and the camel (Matthew 23:24), and the came and the needle's eye (Luke 18:25; Mark 10:25) are hyperboles in Jesus' teaching that reveal a gentle touch of humor. (IB)

Verse 42:

hypocrite -- A "hypocrite" deliberately gives a false impression. Jesus refers to men, pitifully deceived about their own condition. (JBC)

"Thou hypocrite" -- This is a powerful picture of blind self-complacency and incompetence, the key word to argument here. (INT--Robinson)

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(19) PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

Matthew 7:6

11. Read Matthew 7:6

(1) Proverbs 23:9

Matthew 7:6

6 "Do not give what is holy to dogs, or throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them underfoot, and turn and tear you to pieces.

This saying has furnished interpreters difficulty; it is not clear what is concealed by the figure. The saying is chiasmic. Its original form may have been: "Give not the holy to dogs/lest they tear you;/nor cast your pearls before swine/ lest they trample them." Whatever the original force of the saying was (another popular proverb, perhaps?), in Matthew it most probably refers to the proclamation and teaching of the Gospel. In this hypothesis the dogs and the swine can scarcely be any of those who in Matthew are least hospitable to the Gospel: the scribes and Pharisees. The saying is harsh, but more so to us than it would be in its original utterance; the use of popular proverbs in this fashion was a commonplace in ancient Near Eastern wisdom (JBC)

It is difficult to see why this verse is in this context. Perhaps in Matthew's special source it immediately followed 6:1-8, 16-18. In that case the connection was: "Just as religious acts are done for self-advertising, so religious teaching is appropriate only in the presence of those who are ready to appreciate it." The Midrash on Songs of Solomon 1:2 compares the words of Torah to a treasure which is to be revealed only to the pious. Another parallel is found in Plato: "To find the maker and father of this universe is a difficult task; and when you have found him, you cannot speak of him before all people." But Jesus did not teach esoteric doctrines; and if he said these words, it was to warn his disciples to turn away from opponents toward those who were receptive, as in 10:13-14; 22:8-10. Jewish Christians no doubt found the saying comforting in times of controversy. The *Didache* applies it to the Eucharist, but this is "modernization." It is probably the "swine" that "trample" the "pearls underfoot" and the "dogs" that "turn to attack." Both

were unclean animals abhorred by the Jews, and Palestinian scavenger dogs were vicious. (IB)

“That which is holy unto the dogs” -- It is not clear what “the holy” refers, to ear-rings or to amulets, but that would not appeal to dogs. It has been argued that the reference is to meat offered in sacrifice that must not be flung to dogs: It is not that the dogs would not eat it, for it would be welcome to them; but that it would be a profanation to give it to them (Exodus 22:31). The yelping dogs would jump at it. Dogs are kin to wolves and infest the streets of oriental cities. (INT--Robinson)

“your pearls before the swine” -- Pearls look a bit like peas or acorns and would deceive the hogs until they discovered the deception. The wild boars haunt the Jordan Valley still are not far removed from bears as they trample with their feet and rend with their tusks those who have angered them. (INT--Robinson)

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(20) THE ANSWER TO PRAYERS

Matthew 7:7-11

12. Read Matthew 7:7-11 entirely through one time.
(1) Mark 11:24 (2) Luke 11:9-13
13. Read Matthew 7:7
(1) Matthew 18:19
14. Read Matthew 7:8
(1) Luke 18:1-8 (2) John 14:13
15. Read Matthew 7:9-10
(1) No references
16. Read Matthew 7:11
(1) I John 5:14-15

Matthew 7:7-11

- 7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.
- 8 For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.
- 9 Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asks for a loaf of bread,
- 10 or a snake when he asks for a fish?
- 11 If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him.

Overview from IB:

Even Matthew probably did not think of these verses as connected with 7:6. Luke

has them where they belong (11:9-13), at the end of a section on prayer.

Verse 7:

Ask and it will be given -- Prayer to most people means the prayer of petition, and this is the prayer recommended here. The deliberate repetition of the threefold formula, ask-receive, seek-find, knock-be-opened, is intended to assure the disciples that prayer is heard and to encourage them to present their petitions to God. There is no real opposition between this passage and 6:8, 32, where Jesus speaks of the prayer of worried anxiety, which reflects the excessive solicitude of those who utter it. It is possible that the type of nervous care discussed in 6:25-34 can reflect itself in the prayer of the worried person. Prayer should be uttered in the spirit of freedom from worry and in the assurance that it is heard and answered. (JBC)

Verses 7-8:

The emphasis is on “ask;” prayer is essential for the religious person. Petition is a natural expression of the family relationship, and it is enough for one to be humble and to trust. This section does not raise any of those theological questions which we find it difficult to avoid. Jesus does not teach that every wish will be granted (26:39), and such sayings as 21:21-22 are hyperbolic. (IB)

Verse 9:

when he asks for a loaf of bread -- Or, “if a son asks for bread.” The assurance is illustrated by homely examples from family life; the father will give his children what they ask, and he certainly will not give them something harmful in answer to their requests. The bread is the round loaf that has a strange resemblance to a stone. Matthew uses this example instead of the picturesque example of the egg and the scorpion (Luke 11:12); this well-known Palestinian nuisance roughly resembles an egg. (JBC)

“Loaf ... stone” -- some stones look like loaves of bread. So the devil suggested that Jesus make loaves out of stones (Matthew 4:3). (INT--Robinson)

Verses 9-10:

“A loaf” is shaped somewhat like a “stone,” and “a fish” like a “scorpion.” (IB)

Verse 10:

“Fish...serpent” -- fish, common article of food, and water-snakes could easily be substituted. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 11:

you then, who are wicked -- Or, “you who are evil.” Fathers, even though they are “evil,” take care of their children; this is merely a statement of the human condition. The Father in heaven is not evil, and can be counted on to act like a father. (JBC)

This is not a reflection on man’s depravity, but a recognition that in comparison to God all men are sinful (Mark 10:18; Luke 17:10; Psalm 14:2-3). The same type of argument is found in Luke 11:5-8; 18:1-8. If persistence in petition will move a surly Palestinian peasant and unjust judge, how much more will it avail with a loving Father! (IB)

(21) THE GOLDEN RULE

Matthew 7:12

Luke 6:31

17. Read Matthew 7:12
(1) Luke 6:31

Matthew 7:12

- 12 "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets.

This verse has parallels in Judaism and in other ancient literature. The best known is probably the saying attributed to Rabbi Hillel, given in answer to the challenge of a proselyte to explain the whole Law while the proselyte stood on one foot: "That which displeases you do not do to another. This is the whole Law; the rest is commentary." The saying of Hillel is echoed in the last part of Matthew's sentence, not found in Luke; but the saying attributed to Hillel cannot be dated. The addition of Matthew does not support the claim that the saying is entirely new in Christianity, as indeed it is not. Not too much, it seems, should be made of the fact that the Gospel saying is couched in the affirmative, whereas the parallels are couched in the negative; this distinction seems to be hairsplitting. (JBC)

The negative form of the Golden Rule is widely attested in Judaism. One formulation of it is ascribed to Hillel, the greatest of first-century rabbis: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor, this is the whole Torah, all else is interpretation." The *Didache* combines it with the "summary of the Law" (22:37-40) and perhaps draws both from a Jewish source. Other forms of the maxim are found in Tobit 4:15; Philo, and elsewhere. Similar maxims (usually negative) are also found elsewhere. (IB)

Jesus' form of the Golden Rule is positive. He taught that the essence of righteousness is the constructive doing of good, not the negative avoidance of sin. This point can be exaggerated, but it is nevertheless important. The parables of the last judgment (25:31-46) and the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-27) are good examples of his emphasis on activity. It is possible to ask, as Israel Abrahams does, whether the negative rule is not more realistic and practicable, in view of the immense amount of evil in the world and our limited powers of doing good. But the only thing that matters to Jesus is what God wills. He never permits the "native hue of resolution" to be overlooked with such misgivings. It is enough for a true child of God to try to his Father's bidding, no matter what others may do, or what condition of the world may be. (IB)

If the Golden Rule is lifted out of its context, it becomes little more than a piece of prudential secular wisdom. It has often been remarked that to do as you would be done by is good for your business and your social relationships, and usually this is true. But Jesus gives the rule for an entirely different reason. This is God's world, and his children must, in simple faith, exhibit the same outgoing loving kindness which their heavenly Father shows toward them. It is noteworthy that in the Q sermon (Luke 6:31) the Golden Rule stood as an introduction to sayings which command the disciples to love their enemies (Luke 6:32-36). Here it is more than ordinary wisdom; it is a demand for heroic love which requires divine help for its performance. (IB)

"That men should do unto you" -- Luke (6:31) puts the Golden Rule parallel with Matthew 5:42. The negative form is in Tobit 4:15. It was used by Hillel, Philo, and

Confucius among others. The Golden Rule is the distilled essence of that “fulfillment” (Matthew 5:17) which is taught in the sermon. Jesus puts it in positive form. (INT--Robinson)

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- 18. Read Luke 6:31
- (1) Matthew 7:12

Luke 6:31

- 31 Do to others as you would have them do to you.

The Golden Rule is found in a negative form in Tobit 4:15, Philo, Confucius, and others. Jesus gives the supreme example of it to his followers and expects the same heroic charity from them. (JBC)

This is found in a different context and relative order in Matthew’s Sermon (Matthew 7:12). Luke omits the statement that “the Golden Rule” is the quintessence of Scripture. A non-Jew once offered to become a proselyte if Hillel (ca. 20 B.C.) could teach him the law while he stood on one leg. The rabbi said to him: “What you do not like, do not to your neighbor. That is the entire law, and all the rest is commentary.” A negative version of the maxim is also credited to Confucius. (IB)

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(22) THE NARROW GATE

Matthew 7:13-14

- 19. Read Matthew 7:13-14 entirely through one time.
- (1) No reference
- 20. Read Matthew 7:13
- (1) Luke 13:24
- 21. Read Matthew 7:14
- (1) No reference

Matthew 7:13-14

- 13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and those who enter through it are many.
- 14 How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few.

The saying in Luke is given in answer to the question whether few are saved. The question is not found in Matthew, but the saying is no less eschatological. The manuscript evidence for 7:13b in the form most frequently quoted: “Wide is the gate and spacious the way,” is ample; but the critical text reads, “Wide and spacious is the way.”

Where Luke says there are few who seek the narrow gate, Matthew says there are few who find it; Matthew's formula is slightly more rigorous. The saying echoes the rather common teaching of the two spirits and the two ways, found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the *Didache*. (JBC)

Overview on verses 13-23 from IB:

Matthew may have inserted verses 13-14 here because he reflects that few follow the Golden Rule. The warnings in verses 15-23 are, however, attached to the sermon as a whole rather than to any one part of it. (IB)

Verse 13:

"By the narrow gate" -- The Authorized Version has "at the straight gate" which misled those who did not distinguish between "strait" and "straight." The figure of the Two Ways had a wide circulation in Jewish and Christian writings (cf. Deuteronomy 30:19; Jeremiah 21:8; Psalm 5

Verse 14:

Luke's form (13:24) is nearer the original, but his introduction (13:23) is artificial. The original point was: "How hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!" (Mark 10:24). Matthew rewrites the saying to harmonize it with the familiar teaching that there are two ways -- life and death (Deuteronomy 30:19; Jeremiah 21:8; Psalm 1:1ff.). The way is "compressed," narrowed as in a defile between high rocks, a tight place like in Romans 8:35. The way that leads to life involves straits and afflictions. A contemporary of Socrates has been quoted to say: "Seest thou not, then, a little door, and a way before the door, which is not much crowded, but very few travel it? This is the way that leadeth unto true culture." "The broad way" is in every city, town, village, with the glaring white lights that lure to destruction. (INT--Robinson)

* * * * *

(23) FALSE PROPHETS

Matthew 7:15-20

Luke 6:43-45

22. Read Matthew 7:15-20

(1) No reference

23. Read Matthew 7:15

(1) II Peter 2:1

24. Read Matthew 7:16-17

(1) Matthew 12:33

(2) Luke 13:26-27

25. Read Matthew 7:18-19

(1) No reference

26. Read Matthew 7:20

(1) Matthew 25:11-12

Matthew 7:15-20

- 15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but underneath are ravenous wolves.
16 By their fruits you will know them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?
17 Just so, every good tree bears good fruit, and a rotten tree bears bad fruit.
18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree bear good fruit.
19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.
20 So by their fruits you will know them.

Luke (6:43-46) does not contain the warning against false prophets; see 24:11. These do not seem to be "false teachers," but those who claim a new revelation; possibly the saying refers to the Zealot prophets who incited to rebellion against Rome during the period preceding the Jewish War of 66-70 A.D. In any case, the addition of Matthew seems to reflect the experience of the Church. (JBC)

Verse 15:

The "false prophets" are not Pharisees or Sadducees, for the rabbis did not claim to prophesy. These are teachers who belong to eccentric schools of thought on the fringe of the Christian church. The verse reflects the problems of Matthew's own time. It is predicted in 24:5, 11, 24 that these prophets will come in the last days. The *Didache* tells how to detect imposters. "Sheep's clothing" suggests that they creep into the sheepfold; that is, the church. God's people are compared to sheep in Psalm 78:52; 80:1; 100:3, and the metaphor of "wolves" is also frequently found in the Bible (e.g., Zephaniah 3:3; Matthew 10:16; John 10:12; Acts 20:29). (IB)

"False prophets" -- There were false prophets in the time of the OT prophets. Jesus will predict "false Messiahs and false prophets" (Matthew 24:24) who will lead many astray. They came in due time posing as angels of light like Satan, Judaizers (II Corinthians 11:13ff.) and Gnostics (I John 4:1; I Timothy 4:1). Already false prophets were on hand when Jesus spoke on this occasion (cf. Acts 13:6; II Peter 2:1). In outward appearance they look like sheep in the sheep's clothing which they wear, but within they are "ravening wolves", greedy for power, gain, self. It is a tragedy that such men and women reappear through the ages and always find victims. Wolves are more dangerous than dogs and hogs. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 16:

By their fruits -- The true test of prophets or disciples is their life. The comparison of trees and fruits is painfully elaborated. Luke felt the necessity of explaining the comparison (6:45), with the addition of a phrase that makes speech the principal fruit; this is not the real meaning of the original comparison, which refers to deeds. See the recital in Matthew 23. (JBC)

"By their fruits ye shall know them" -- Or, "From their fruits you will recognize them" The verb means "fully know." The illustrations from the trees and vines have many parallels in ancient writers. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 19:

This verse is repeated word for word from the preaching of John the Baptist (3:10), where it has a more suitable context. (JBC)

Verses 16-20

These verses are paralleled by 12:33-35 = Luke 6:43-45. Are they from M, or are they Matthew's rewriting of Q? As they stand, they are poorly arranged, and perhaps the original order was verses 16b, 18, 20 (=Luke 6:44b, 43-44a). Verse 16a is a topic sentence, and verse 17 a positive statement from another source. Matthew brings verse 19 in from the teaching of John the Baptist (3:10=Luke 3:9) because of the word "tree" and his interest in the Last Judgment. Virgil says in the coming age "blushing grapes shall hang on the rude brambles." (IB)

27. Read Luke 6:43-45

(1) Matthew 7:16-20

(2) Matthew 12:33, 35

Luke 6:43-45

- 43 "A good tree does not bear rotten fruit, nor does a rotten tree bear good fruit.
44 For every tree is known by its own fruit. For people do not pick figs from thornbushes, nor do they gather grapes from brambles.
45 A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good, but an evil person out of a store of evil produces evil; for from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks.

Matthew directs these words against false prophets (7:16-21) and/or Pharisees (12:33-35), but Luke gives a much more universal application. (JBC)

The conjunction "for" links the parable with verses 41-42. A transposition of the clauses in verse 43 would have made for a better connection. A bad man cannot utter a good precept. In Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, the sayings (Matthew 7:16-18) enforce the warning against false prophets. Verse 45 has a parallel only in another Matthaean version (Matthew 12:33-35). "Heart" in Semitic anatomy was the seat of the intellect. In view of the final clause of the generalization, "produces good" must mean "utters good words," but Luke's context justifies a wider reference. Character makes the man! (IB)

Verse 44:

"is known" -- The fruit of each tree reveals its actual character. It is the final test. This sentence is not in Matthew 7:17-20, but the same idea is in the repeated saying (Matthew 7:16, 20): "By their fruits ye shall know them," where the verb means "full knowledge." "Bramble bush" -- is an old word, quoted from the LXX in Mark 12:26; Luke 20:37 (from Exodus 3:6) about the burning bush that Moses saw, and by Stephen (Acts 7:30, 35) referring to the same incident. Nowhere else in the NT. Galen has a chapter on its medicinal uses, and the medical writings abound in prescriptions of which it is an ingredient. "Gather" -- is a verb that is common in Greek writers for gathering the ripe fruit. In the NT it is found only here, and in Revelations 14:18. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 45:

"Bringeth forth"--in a similar saying repeated later. Matthew 12:34 has the verb meaning throws out, or casts out which is a bolder figure. When men are natural, heart and mouth act in concert. But otherwise the mouth sometimes professes what the heart does not feel. (INT--Robinson)

(24) THE TRUE DISCIPLE

Matthew 7:21-23

28. Read Matthew 7:21-23
(1) No reference
29. Read Matthew 7:21
(1) Isaiah 29:13 (2) Luke 6:46
30. Read Matthew 7:22-23
(1) Luke 13:26-27
31. Read Matthew 7:22 again
(1) Matthew 25:11-12
32. Read Matthew 7:23 again
(1) Psalm 5:5 (2) Psalm 6:9

Matthew 7:21-23

- 20 So by their fruits you will know them.
- 21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.
- 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not drive out demons in your name? Did we not do mighty deeds in your name?'
- 23 Then I will declare to them solemnly, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers.'

Verse 21:

Lord, Lord -- This address reflects the experience of the primitive church. It is most likely that the reference to prophecy, exorcism, and thaumaturgy also refers to the experience of the primitive church. Devout invocation of Jesus as Lord and the reception of the charismata of the apostolate do not guarantee that one is a genuine disciple. Paul also says that these gifts are vain without love (I Corinthians 13:2). In Matthew the test is doing the will of the Father (Luke 6:46, "doing what I tell you"). (JBC)

Luke 6:46, which parallels both halves of this verse, may be more nearly what Jesus said. His point was: "It is absurd to address a man as 'my teacher' if you pay no attention to his teaching." The disciples had probably come to address him as "Lord," and this word may translate the word *rabbi*, "my great one"; that is, "my teacher" (23:7-8; 26:25, 49; Mark 9:5; John 1:38), a term of respect then coming into use, or perhaps the Aramaic *mar* (I Corinthians 16:22). The Greek word actually could mean anything from "sir" to the divine "lord" of a cult or the Yahweh of the OT, but by the middle of the first century it had special overtones, particularly for the Gentile Christians. When they heard Jesus spoken of as "Lord," they thought of him as lord of heaven and earth. When Jesus

insisted that it is absolutely essential to do “the will of my Father who is Heaven,” his words would have sounded familiar to his hearers. The Mishnah says: “Do as will as if it were your will.”; “Be strong as the leopard and swift as the eagle, fleet as the gazelle and brave as the lion to do the will of your father who is in heaven.” (IB)

“Not--but” -- Sharp contrast between the mere talker and the doer of God’s will.
(INT--Robinson)

Verse 22:

on that day -- In the eschatological judgment Jesus will profess that he does not know them. (JBC)

“In that day” -- is almost a technical term for the messianic age or the world to come (Isaiah 2:11, 17; Zechariah 14:6). Matthew has added the phrase and has also connected this teaching with the work of Christian prophets, exorcists, and miracle workers. All such ministers act *in the name*, and therefore with the power, of Jesus (see for example, Mark 9:38; Acts 19:13; I Corinthians 5:3-5; Matthew 18:20). In Luke 13:26 the Palestinians appeal to the messianic judge on the ground that they have been his table companions and he has taught in their streets. (IB)

“Did we not prophesy in thy name?”-- The use of “did we not” expects the affirmative answer. They claim to have prophesied (preached) in Christ’s name and to have done many miracles. But Jesus will tear off their sheepskin and lay bare the ravening wolf. “I never knew you”; Or, “I was never acquainted with you” (experiential knowledge). Success, as the word counts it, is not a criterion of one’s knowledge of Christ and relation to him. “I will profess unto them”--the very word used of profession of Christ before men (Matthew 10:32). This word Jesus will use for public and open announcement of their doom. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 23:

The formula of reprobation is quoted from Psalm 6:9; neither Matthew nor Luke quotes the LXX exactly. The form of the saying in Luke 13:26-27 (“We have eaten and drunk with you, and you have taught in our streets”) points the saying much more directly to the Jews. In Matthew the saying is directed at false disciples within the Christian community. (JBC)

The quotation is from Psalm 6:8. “Iniquity” (or, lawlessness) is a favorite word of Matthew’s but it was also in Q. Here it refers to sin in general; there is no necessary reference to Gentile Christians’ freedom from the law, although at one time Jewish Christians may have understood the saying in this way. (IB)

(25) THE TWO FOUNDATIONS

Matthew 7:24-29

Luke 6:46-49

33. Read Matthew 7:24-29 entirely through one time.
 - (1) No reference
34. Read Matthew 7:24-27
 - (1) Luke 6:47-49

35. Read Matthew 7:25-26 again
(1) Proverbs 10:25
36. Read Matthew 28
(1) No reference
37. Read Matthew 29
(1) Mark 1:22 (2) Luke 5:12-14

Matthew 7:24-29

- 24 "Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.
- 25 The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock.
- 26 And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand.
- 27 The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. And it collapsed and was completely ruined."

Overview from JBC:

The words of Jesus are a call and a challenge to action; they are not mere teaching, and understanding them is an insufficient response. The challenge is serious; failure to meet it is followed by catastrophe -- "great is the fall." This again is the eschatological catastrophe.

Overview of verses 24-27 from IB:

Some of the ancient law codes (Leviticus 26:3-45; Deuteronomy 28:3-6, 16-19) concluded with a blessing and a curse. This is not, however, a direct statement that God will reward or punish, and it can be applied either to the coming judgment or to the crisis of life. Similar ideas are found in Psalm 1:1; Jeremiah 17:5-8. A rabbinical parable reads: "A man who has words and has learned much Torah, to what may he be likened? To a man who builds below with stones and above with adobe; and when much water comes and surrounds it, the stones are not moved from their place. But a man who has no good works and learns Torah, to what may he be likened? To a man who builds first with adobe and then with stones, and when even small streams come, they are immediately toppled over."

Matthew's form is in the most respects more primitive than Luke's (6:47-49). Its two characters are Palestinian. The wise one builds on a rock, but the foolish one builds a house of mud bricks in a wadi or dry torrent bed, which is smooth and inviting, like our southwestern arroyos. When spring and fall rains come, such watercourses may quickly become raging rivers. Luke thinks of the wise man as digging deep to build foundations. This is perhaps more natural in a Greco-Roman city.

Verse 24:

house on rock -- Or, "upon the rock." The comparison of house builders presupposes Palestinian conditions. Luke, however, was not familiar with these. The

describes the digging of a deep foundation (6:48). It is rather striking that Hellenistic buildings in Palestinian sites were built on deeper foundations than earlier buildings; but this was the practice with large houses or public buildings, not with the ordinary dwelling. The flood Luke envisages is the flood of a river. Matthew knows the Palestinian winter rains that run off in sudden large flows of water. These rains not only fill the stream beds (the wadis) with rapid torrents but erode the slopes of the hills. The soil is swept from beneath a house that is not founded on the bedrock. The house built of mud brick is particularly vulnerable. It is action, not knowledge or profession of belief, that furnishes the secure foundation for the life of the disciple; and the love without which Paul says charismata are vain is action, not mere profession of belief. (JBC)

“And doeth them” -- This is the point in the parable of the wise builder, “who digged and went deep, and laid a foundation upon the rock (LUke 6:48). (INT--Robinson)
Verse 25:

“Was founded” -- It has been built upon the rock, and it has stood. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 26:

“And doeth them not” -- The foolish builder put his house on the sands that could not hold in the storm. One is reminded of the words of Jesus at the beginning of the Sermon in Luke 5:19 about the one “who does and teaches.” Hearing sermons is a dangerous business if one does not put them into practice. (INT--Robinson)

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38. Read Luke 6:46-49 entirely through one time.

(1) No reference

39. Read Luke 6:46

(1) Matthew 7:21

(3) James 1:22

(2) Romans 2:13

40. Read Luke 6:47-49

(1) Matthew 7:24-27

Luke 6:46-49

46 "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' but not do what I command?

47 I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, listens to my words, and acts on them.

48 That one is like a person building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when the flood came, the river burst against that house but could not shake it because it had been well built.

49 But the one who listens and does not act is like a person who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, it collapsed at once and was completely destroyed."

See Matthew 7:24-27. Luke adapts this parable. Matthew reflects the Palestinian setting where the bedrock is close to the surface and deep foundations are unnecessary. The foolish man builds his house on the sandy surface of a wadi, dry in summer but swollen with water during the rainy season. (JBC)

Verse 46:

A saying that is pregnant with pathos in Luke's version, but impersonal in Matthew's. "Lord" originally meant no more than "sir" or "master," but would be filled with much richer content by readers of the Gospel. All manuscripts support the double form of the address. (IB)

"and do not" -- This is the point about every sermon that counts. The two parables that follow illustrate this point. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 48:

"dugged and went deep" -- To dig is as old as Homer, meaning to make deep. "and laid a foundation" -- is the whole point. This wise builder struck the rock before he laid the foundation. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 49:

"it fell in" -- to fall together, to collapse. "the ruin" -- The crash like a giant oak in the forest resounded far and wide. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 47-49:

The one "house" had a "foundation upon rock," the other was "built .. on the ground", and the disaster was due to a flooded river. More typically Palestinian topography and climate are reflected in Matthew's version, where one house was built on rock and the other on sand, and the disaster was caused by the impact of winter storms. Luke may have edited the original to stress the importance of good construction rather than the selection of a good site. "Because it had been well built" is the better attested reading. A similar parable has been preserved in rabbinical literature: "To whom can we compare a man who has studied diligently in the Law and has many good works? To a man who has laid a foundation of stones and built upon them with unbaked bricks. Even if great floods come and wash against them, the stones will not be dislodged. And to whom can we compare a man who has studied the Law but has no good works? To a man who has built first with bricks and then with stones. Even a little water will cause the stones to tumble at once." (IB)

* * * * *

Matthew 7:28-29

28 When Jesus finished these words, the crowds were astonished at his teaching,
29 for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Verse 28:

"the multitudes were astonished" -- They listened spell-bound to the end and were left amazed, in a buzz of astonishment. The verb literally means that they were struck out of themselves. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 29:

"and not as their scribes" -- They had heard many sermons before from the regular rabbis in the synagogues. We have specimens of these discourses preserved in the Mishnah and Gemara, the Jewish Talmud when both were completed, the driest, dullest collection of disjointed comments upon every conceivable problem in the history of mankind. The scribes quoted the rabbis before them and were afraid to express an idea without bolstering it up by some predecessor. Jesus spoke with authority of truth, the

reality and freshness of the morning light, and the power of God's Spirit. The sermon which made such a profound impression ended with the tragedy of the fall of the house on the sand like the crash of a giant oak in the forest. There was no smoothing over the outcome. (INT--Robinson)

Overview from JBC:

Each of the major discourses of Matthew is concluded by a similar formula. The result of his teaching in a phrase taken from Mark (1:22), is astonishment. The astonishment is not attributed to the content of the teaching, but to the manner in which it was proposed: Jesus teaches with authority unlike that of the scribes. The authority of the scribes was based on tradition: The scribe was careful to repeat the traditional teaching and to show that his own commentary rose from the tradition and was in harmony with it. The first part of the sermon is a deliberate and explicit departure from tradition. Jesus taught not like a scribe but like a prophet, although the word is not used. The Greek word here that is translated "authority" is one that means "authority by commission." Jesus has a commission from the Father to teach--a commission the scribes do not have. He manifests this commission clearly, and the people are astonished.

From IB:

Matthew, upon arriving at 4:22, departed from Mark 1:20, which he had been copying. He now artistically weaves Mark 1:22 into the first of his five summary colophons. Jesus "taught them as who had authority"; cf. on 5:22. "Scribes", however, cited the authority of previous sages whenever possible. [The Jews based their teaching on a continuing tradition.

Summary from JBC:

The Sermon on the Mount is not "the New Law;" this phrase is nowhere applied to the sermon, and the sermon is not couched either in the form of the Law or in the form of rabbinical teaching. It is very probably a form of Christian teaching (didache), the instruction given to those who had believed in the proclamation (kerygma) and received baptism. It was formed by a more or less systematic collection and arrangement of the remembered sayings of Jesus, adapted and clarified where necessary, for the group that was being instructed.

The sermon is not a complete code of Christian ethics. There are many directions for Christian morality in the NT that are not found in the sermon. Indeed no single passage of the NT contains a complete and systematic code of conduct. The Christian moral revolution consisted in a reorientation of values. This can be expressed in a few simple phrases, most of which can be summed up as directions to love. Other moral directions are applications of the principle of love. The sermon is a statement of those principles "Matthew" or his sources considered basic enough to be collected and placed in the significant position of introducing the account of the words and deeds of Jesus.

Session 12

c. HEALING OF THE CENTURION'S SERVANT

Matthew 8:1, 5-13

Luke 7:1-10

1. Read Matthew 8:1
(1) Mark 1:40-44 (2) Luke 5:12-14
2. Read Matthew 8:5-13
(1) Luke 7:1-10 (2) John 4:46-53
3. Read Matthew 8:5-10
(1) No references
4. Read Matthew 8:11-12
(1) Matthew 13:42, 50 (4) Matthew 25:30
(2) Matthew 22:13 (5) Luke 13:28-29
(3) Matthew 24:51
5. Read Matthew 8:13
(1) No reference

Matthew 8:1, 5-13

- 1 When Jesus came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him.
.....
- 5 When he entered Capernaum, a centurion approached him and appealed to him,
6 saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, suffering dreadfully."
7 He said to him, "I will come and cure him."
8 The centurion said in reply, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my
roof; only say the word and my servant will be healed.
9 For I too am a person subject to authority, with soldiers subject to me. And I say
to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come here,' and he comes; and to my
slave, 'Do this,' and he does it."
10 When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, "Amen, I
say to you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith.
11 I say to you, many will come from the east and the west, and will recline with
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the banquet in the kingdom of heaven,
12 but the children of the kingdom will be driven out into the outer darkness, where
there will be wailing and grinding of teeth."
13 And Jesus said to the centurion, "You may go; as you have believed, let it be done
for you." And at that very hour (his) servant was healed.

This section has as its basic content ten miracles, most of which are found in Mark. However, the order of Mark is revised. Mark's "Day in Capernaum" has nearly disappeared as such, and materials that follow the call of the apostles in Mark have been placed before it by Matthew. The events are arranged to form an introduction to the discourse on the apostolic mission, which concludes this part of Matthew.

Overview of Matthew 8:1 - 9:34 from IB:

This part of Matthew's Gospel consists of three groups of miracles, separated from each other by two teaching sections which inculcate absolute loyalty to Christ and draw a sharp distinction between the new dispensation and the old. Matthew's purpose is to exhibit Jesus as the pattern for the Christian missionary, who is expected to show the signs of an apostle (II Corinthians 12:12; cf. Acts 3:1-12; 4:8-10), although the mere performance of miracles is not sufficient without Christian behavior (7:22). This narrative section leads up to the second great discourse (9:35 - 11:1), which sums up the lessons taught by the narrative (cf. especially 9:37-38; 10:1, 7-8; 11:5). The miracles are ten in number, corresponding to the tradition in the Mishnah: "Ten wonders were wrought for our fathers in Egypt and ten at the sea. ... Ten wonders were wrought for our fathers in the temple." The climax of the section is 9:26 and Matthew may have added the last two miracles to complete this traditional number.

The evangelist draws on Q for two of the miracles (8:5-13; 9:32-33) and one of the teaching groups (8:19-22)--otherwise Mark is the sole source. Matthew has taken all the available material in Mark down to Mark 2:22, except 1:23-28, which he omits, partly because he wishes to compress two healings of demoniacs into one (8:28-34). To this he adds miracles from Mark 8:22-26 and 10:46-52, with a few touches from Mark 1:43-45. He freely rearranges Mark's framework to achieve a smooth narrative; for example, 9:1 replaces Mark 2:1 because Jesus has been on the other side of the sea.

Overview of verses 5-13 from JBC:

In contrast to the preceding incident of the healing of a leper, this passage illustrates the "saying-story" as opposed to the "miracle story." In the healing of the leper, the miracle itself is the point of the story. In the story of the centurion, the miracle is the occasion by which the faith of the Gentile centurion is manifested; and his faith in turn is the occasion of the saying of Jesus (8:10-12). The story is not found in Mark, and the variations between Matthew and Luke are such as to raise some doubt whether the story was found in Q. These doubts do not appear to be well founded; a comparison of Matthew and Luke shows that Matthew uses his customary technique of abbreviating narratives. The scene is Capernaum.

Overview of verses 1-17 from IB:

Jesus' healing powers are attested by numerous traditions in Christian and non-Christian writings. Both Christians and their competitors accepted it as a fact that Jesus worked miracles. The difference was that his enemies ascribed this to magic (12:24). A Talmudic tradition, in fact, says that Jesus was hanged on the eve of Passover because he practiced sorcery and led Israel astray. Well-attested healing stories have been told of Jewish rabbis and Hellenistic teachers, and of Christian saints and healers down to the present day.

No scientist or historian has in his hands the data by which he might decide categorically, at this late date, just what powers Jesus exercised, or exactly what event lies

behind this or that story. And although the believer must insist that the full understanding of Jesus' activity can be had only through faith, it is yet fair to say that many of his healings are partially understandable in terms of present-day medical science. He cured some diseases which involve psychological, and spiritual, factors, and it comes as no surprise to the scientist that Jesus had this ability. Where the scientist's work ends, the theologian's begins. A "miracle" may be defined as an event which evokes wonder and religious awe and leads the beholders to give praise and thanks to God. It may, or may not, be explicable in terms of ordinary ideas of cause and effect. Ancient Christians, of course, drew no distinctions between nature miracles and healing miracles, or between different types of healings. Far from raising questions in the minds of readers, these stories were for them actual evidence of Jesus' power and divinity, and John's Gospel frankly uses them as such. No doubt some of the narratives were used to reinforce various ideas; for example, that Christ's power was always available, and that he would always stand by his people; but they were accepted literally and not as mere symbols.

Ancient Jews and Christians sometimes explained sickness as God's punishment for man's sin, and sometimes ascribed it to the activity of demons. The two ideas were not mutually exclusive, for the demons might lead men to wickedness for which they would be punished. The world was regarded as full of evil spirits (4:8-9; I John 5:19; I Corinthians 5:5; John 12:31; Ephesians 2:2), and these demons frequently smote human beings or entered into them. There is some reason to think that in the earliest form of the gospel tradition all types of sickness were ascribed to demons (9:32-33; Acts 10:38; Luke 13:11; Mark 9:25), and the distinction sometimes drawn between demoniacs and other sufferers may belong to a later stage of development. Jesus himself seems to have regarded his healing as a sign that God's kingdom was at last overcoming the kingdom of Satan (12:28 = Luke 11:20).

Matthew and Luke (7:1-10) describe the sickness and the circumstances of this cure somewhat differently, but give the conversation in almost identical words. Luke's account is introduced by the mention of friendly Jewish elders. Matthew lacks this touch and instead includes a saying about the rejection of the Jews (verses 11-12). The emphasis is not on Jesus' healing powers but on how a Gentile came to believe in Jesus and was praised for it.

Verse 1:

The transition made by this verse is necessary because of 4:25; 5:1. (IB)

Verse 5:

[a centurion](#) -- The petitioner is an officer of the Roman legion whose command was normally 100 men; but the number could be more or less. These officers, who corresponded somewhat to our noncommissioned officers, were usually in charge of small local posts and garrisons. It is interesting to note that every of these officers who appears in the NT is an honest and kindly man. The sick person is called a "slave" by Luke, and a "boy" by Matthew; but the Greek word for "boy" was a common Greek designation for a young slave. The disease cannot be identified; paralysis means the loss of the use of the limbs, and here it is accompanied with great pain; this detail is not found in Luke. (JBC)

At Tell Hum, probably the ancient "Capernaum" (cf. 4:13), a splendid second-century synagogue has been excavated. This probably took the place of the one which,

according to Luke 7:5 was built by the “centurion.” In the Roman army a centurion commanded one hundred men and his rank was comparable to that of a modern non-commissioned officer. This man was probably in charge of troops used for police purposes by Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and son of Herod the Great. Antipas did not have the right to maintain an army. (IB)

Verse 6:

The word translated “Lord” need not mean more than “sir” in this context. The word rendered “servant” is an intimate term which also means “boy.” We do not now in what way he was “paralyzed;” perhaps through gout or arthritis, and it has been suggested that it may have been from some type of hysteria. (IB)

Verse 7:

This verse is understood by many interpreters as a question: “Shall I come and heal him?” Normally a Jew would not enter the house of a Gentile; he would incur ritual uncleanness. Matthew makes the centurion the petitioner; Luke has the centurion send Jews as emissaries and intercessors, and the centurion does not appear until Jesus is on his way to the house. This is more probably an omission by Matthew rather than an expansion of Luke. The omission unfortunately leaves out a pleasing detail of excellent relations between a Gentile and the Jewish community. The omission, however, takes no more credit from one party than from the other; and it is economical rather than tendentious. (JBC)

Jesus’ answer, with its emphatic “I” in the Greek, might be read as a question: “Shall I come ...” (IB)

Verses 8-9:

The centurion is not merely polite; he may fear that Jesus has scruples against entering a Gentile house. Furthermore, he has confidence in the sufficiency of Jesus’ “word” alone; since he knows both how to receive and how to give commands, he assumes that when the command is given the result will follow. (IB)

Verse 8:

The climactic line in both versions is the centurion’s belief that Jesus need only speak; a visit and personal contact are unnecessary. (JBC)

Verse 9:

[a person subject to authority](#) -- Or, “a man under authority.” He illustrates from his own position. He, a military officer of lower rank, gets instant obedience and execution from men under him; if military discipline can effect things by a word, Jesus is surely no less “under authority.” (JBC)

As a military man, the centurion had learned obedience to his superiors and so expected obedience to his commands, instant obedience. Therefore his faith in Christ’s power over the illness of the boy even without Jesus’ presence. Jesus had only to speak (say) the “word” (Acts 8:8), and it would be done. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 10:

The answer of Jesus is the first saying in Matthew that contrasts the unbelief of the Jews with the faith of the uninstructed Gentile. Actually at this point in Matthew’s narrative the unbelief of the Jews has not yet appeared; in Matthew’s version even the request of the Jews that Jesus should come to the house to heal the slave (Luke 5:3) is omitted. In Luke, likewise, the faith of the centurion seems to grow from the initial

request to the point where he intercepts Jesus. (JBC)

This “faith” may be at present no more than confidence in Jesus’ power, but on this foundation a much more important trust can be built. (IB)

“So great faith” -- In a Roman centurion and greater than in any of the Jews. In like manner Jesus marveled at the great faith of the Canaanitish woman (Matthew 15:28). (INT--Robinson)

Verses 11-12:

This saying is found in Luke (13:28-30) in a different and entirely eschatological context, which is probably its original situation. “The sons of the kingdom” are simply “you” in Luke. The Gentiles will be admitted with the true Israelites in the Messianic banquet. This theme is based on Isaiah 25:6-8; it conceives the Messianic deliverance as admission to a festive dinner that God prepares. The Messianic banquet is found in apocalyptic literature and in the Dead Sea Scrolls writings and is echoed frequently in the NT. It is a part of the idea of the Eucharist. (JBC)

These verses are found in a different context in Luke 13:28-29. The metaphor is that of the great banquet in the days of Messiah, alluded to in 26:29 (=Mark 14:25); Luke 22:29-30. The idea that “many” Gentiles will be accepted is found in Isaiah 45:6; 49:12; Malachi 1:11. The “sons of the kingdom” are Jews, who are its natural heirs. John the Baptist made a similar statement (3:9). This attitude to Gentiles follows logically from Jesus’ other teachings. The “outer darkness” and the “weeping and gnashing of teeth” were thought of earlier in Jewish history as characteristic of Sheol; by Jesus’ time they were part of the usual description of Gehenna. (IB)

Verse 12b:

This is an eschatological commonplace in Matthew (13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30). (JBC)

Verse 13:

The servant was healed “at that very moment.” A striking parallel to this is found in a rabbinical story of the first century A.D., according to which the son of Rabban Gamaliel was healed at a distance at the moment when another rabbi prayed for him. (IB)

Summary from JBC:

The theme of the story is faith--the kind of faith that sets no conditions. The choice of a Gentile to illustrate this faith the first the idea is raised in the Gospel is certainly deliberate; it sets a tone Matthew maintains in the rest of his book: The faith of the Gentiles gives them the title of the true Israel which the Jews have forfeited by an unbelief in the Messiah. (JBC)

No doubt John 4:46-52 is a variant of the same story, but it is so profoundly modified that a common source cannot be traced with certainty. (JBC)

Summary from LToJC:

We find ourselves once more in Capernaum. It is remarkable how much that is connected with the ministry and the innermost life of Jesus is gathered around this little fishing town. In all probability its prosperity was probably due mainly to the neighboring Tiberius which Herod Antipas had built ten years previously. It is also noteworthy that many of the most attractive characters and incidents in the Gospel history are connected with Capernaum. Here was the home of that believing Court-official, whose child Jesus had healed. Here was also the household of Peter. Here it was that the paralytic had

found, together with forgiveness of his sins, health of body. Its streets that looked out on the deep blue Sea of Galilee had been thronged by eager multitudes in search of life to body and soul. Here Matthew-Levi had heard and followed the call of Jesus; and there the good centurion had, in stillness, learned to love Israel and serve Israel's King, and built that splendid synagogue which had been consecrated by the presence and teaching of Jesus.

Now, from the Mount of the Beatitudes, it was again to the temporary home at Capernaum that Jesus retired. Of that multitude which had hung entranced on His Words many followed him. There was now constant pressure around him and his disciples from the crowds. In its briefness, the account of what these "friends" or rather "those from Him" -- his home -- said and did, is most pictorial. On greetings reaching them, with reiterated, growing, and perhaps Orientally exaggerating details, they hastened out of their house in a neighboring street to take possession of him, as if he had needed their charge.

Presently there came a summons of the heathen centurion and the healing of his servant, which both Matthew and Luke record, as especially bearing on the progressive unfolding of Christ's mission. No really serious difficulties are encountered in trying to harmonize the details of the two narratives. The fundamental truth in both accounts is the same. This is not to say that the Gentiles are preferred before Israel. Far from this, their faith is only put on an equality with that of believing Israel. It is not Israel, but Israel's fleshly claims and unbelief, that are rejected. The Gentile faith occupies, not a new position outside Israel, but shares with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob the fulfillment of the promise made to their faith. We have here the widest Jewish universalism, the true interpretation of Israel's hope; and this, even by the admission of our opponents, not as later addition, but as forming part of Christ's original teaching.

What is the impression left on our minds of an event, the record of which is admitted to be authentic? The heathen centurion is a real historical personage. He was captain of a troop quartered in Capernaum, and in the service of Herod Antipas. We know that such troops were chiefly recruited from Samaritans and Gentiles of Caesarea. Nor is there the slightest evidence that this centurion was a "proselyte of righteousness." The accounts in both Matthew and Luke are incompatible with this idea. A "proselyte of righteousness" could have had no reason for approaching Christ directly, nor would he have spoken of himself as "unfit" that Christ should come under his roof. However, such language did accord quite well with Jewish notions of a Gentile, since Gentile houses were considered as defiled, and also as defiling those who entered them. On the other hand, the "proselytes of righteousness" were in all respects equal to Jews, so that the words of Christ concerning Jews and Gentiles, as reported by Matthew, would not have been applicable to them. The centurion was simply one who had learned to love Israel and to reverence Israel's God; one who, not only in his official position, but from love and reverence, had built that synagogue of which, strangely enough, now after more than eighteen centuries, the remains in their rich and elaborate carvings of cornices and entablatures, of capitals and niches, show with what liberal hand he had dealt his votive offerings.

We know too little of the man to judge what earlier impulses had led him to such reverence for Israel's God. They might have been something to incline him towards it in

his early years in Caesarea; or in his family relationships; or perhaps even in that very servant (possibly a Jew) whose implicit obedience to his master seems in part to have led him up to faith in analogous submission of all things to the behests of Christ. The circumstances, the times, the place, the very petition of the man, make such suppositions rational, even suggest them. In that case, his whole bearing would be consistent with itself, and with what we know of the views and feelings of the time. In the place where the son of his fellow-official at the Court of Herod Antipas had been healed by the Word of Jesus, spoken at a distance, in the Capernaum which was the home of Jesus and the scene of so many miracles, it was only what we might expect, that in such a case he should turn to Jesus and ask his help. Quite consistent with his character is the straightforwardness of his expectancy, characteristically illustrated by his military experience--the wisdom of his faith beautifully shining out in the bluntness of the soldier. When he had learned to own Israel's God, and to believe in the absolute unlimited power of Jesus, no difficulties would come to him, nor such complaints arise, as they did in the minds of the Scribes, or even of the Jewish laity. It is not even necessary to suppose that, in his unlimited faith in Jesus, the centurion had distinct apprehension of His essential divinity. In general, it holds true, that throughout the Evangelic history, belief in the Divinity of Our Lord was the outcome of experience of His Person and Work, not the condition and assumption of it, as is the case since the Pentecostal descent of the Holy Spirit and His indwelling in the church.

The question with the centurion was not "could" Jesus heal his servant, but rather "would" He do so? He knew of none who had, as of yet, been "doomed" to disappointment by a request for healing, neither publican nor sinner--but as a Gentile was he "unworthy" or rather "unfit" for it? This history presents a crucial question, not only as regarded the character of Christ's work, but the relation to it of the Gentile world. Quite consistent with this--in fact, its necessary outcome, --were the scruples of the centurion to make direct, personal application to Jesus. In the measure he revered Jesus, would these doubts, from his standpoint, increase. Since the houses of Gentiles were "unclean", entrance into them, and still more familiar fellowship, would "defile" the Jew. The centurion must have known this, and the higher he placed Jesus on the pinnacle of Judaism, the more natural it was for him to communicate with Jesus through the elders of the Jews, and not to expect the personal presence of Jesus, even if the application to him were attended with success. Here it is important to mark that, in the view of the centurion and the Jewish elders who undertook his commission, Jesus as yet occupied the purely Jewish standpoint.

From the narratives of both Matthew and Luke we are led to infer that the house of the centurion was not in Capernaum itself, but in its immediate neighborhood, probably on the road to Tiberias. In Matthew 8:7 we read the words of Jesus when consenting: "I, having come, will heal him;" just as in Luke's narrative, a space of time intervenes, in which intimation is conveyed to the centurion, when he sends "friends" to arrest Christ's actual coming into his house. Nor does Matthew speak of any actual request on the part of the centurion, even though at first sight his narrative seems to imply a personal appearance. The general statement "beseeching him" must be explained by the more detailed narrative of the embassy of Jewish elders. There is another marked agreement in the seeming difference of the two accounts. In Luke's narrative, the second

message of the centurion embodies two different expressions which are unfortunately rendered by the same word. It should read: "Trouble not thyself, for I am not fit (Leviticallly speaking) that thou should enter under my roof"--Leviticallly, or Judaistically speaking, my house is not a fit place for thy entrance; "wherefore neither did I judge myself worthy (spiritually, morally, religiously) to come unto thee." In Matthew's presentation of the same event to the Jews, this latter "worthiness" is omitted, and we only have Luke's first term, "fit": "I am not fit that thou should come under my roof," my house is unfitting thine entrance.. This seems to bear out the reasons previously indicated for the characteristic peculiarities of the two narratives of Matthew and Luke.

In their leading features the two narratives entirely agree. There is earnest supplication for his sick, seemingly dying servant. Again, the centurion in the fullest sense believes in the power of Jesus to heal, in the same manner as he knows his own commands as an officer would be implicitly obeyed. The centurion would not have held the same belief of that of the Jewish view of the time concerning the illness of his servant; that is, that the disease of the servant was caused by evil demons or noxious powers who would obey Jesus as soldiers or servants do their officer or master. It was in this very thing that Jesus contrasted the faith of the Gentile with that of Israel, indicating that the language in question must be taken in the obvious sense. In his self-acknowledged "unfitness" lay the real "fitness" of this good soldier for membership with the true Israel; and in his deep-felt "unworthiness" the real "worthiness" for "the kingdom" and its blessings. It was this utter disclaimer of all claim, outward or inward, which prompted that absoluteness of trust which deemed all things possible with Jesus, and marked the real faith of the true Israel. Here was one, who was in the state described in the first clauses of the "beatitudes", and to whom come the promise of the second clauses; because Christ is the connecting link between the two, and because he consciously was such to the centurion, and the only possible connecting link between them.

Participation in the blessedness of the kingdom is not connected with any outward relationship towards it, nor does it belong to our inward consciousness in regard to it--it is granted by the King to that faith which, in deepest simplicity realizes, and holds fast to him. This account of the healing of the centurion's servant must be considered as the high-point in this history, and the reason for its record in the NT is concerned.

For the fuller understanding of the words of Jesus, the Jewish modes of thought which he used in illustration, require to be briefly explained. It was a common belief that, in the day of the Messiah redeemed Israel would be gathered to a great feast, together with the patriarchs and heroes of the Jewish faith. This notion, which was but a coarsely literal application of such prophetic figures as in Isaiah 30:6, had perhaps yet another and deeper meaning. As each weekly Sabbath was to be honored by a feast in which the best which the family could procure was to be placed on the board, so would the world's great Sabbath be marked by a feast in which the Great Householder, Israel's King, would entertain his household and guests. One thing was very clear about this special feast--and that was no Gentiles could have any part in the feast. In fact, the shame and anger of "these" foes on seeing the "table spread" for this Jewish feast was among the points especially noticed in fulfilling the predictions of Psalm 23:5. On this point, then, the words of Jesus in reference to the believing centurion formed the most marked contrast to

Jewish teaching.

When Jesus consigned the unbelieving to “outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth” he once more used Jewish language, only with an opposite application of it. Gehinnom--of which the entrance marked the ever-ascending smoke was in the Valley of Hinnom, between two palm trees--lay beyond “the mountains of darkness.” It was a place of darkness, to which in the day of the Lord, the Gentiles would be consigned. On the other hand, the merit of circumcision would in the day of the Messiah deliver Jewish sinners from Gehinnom. It seems a debatable question, whether the expression “outer darkness” may not have been intended to designate--besides the darkness outside the lighted house of the Father, and even beyond the darkness of Gehinnom--a place of hopeless, endless night. Associated with it is “the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.” In Rabbinic thought the former was connected with sorrow, the latter almost always with anger--not, as generally supposed, with anguish.

To complete our understanding of the contrast between the views of the Jews and the teaching of Jesus, we must bear in mind that since the Gentiles could not possibly share in the feast of the Messiah, the Israelites had claim and title to it. To use Rabbinic terms, the former were “children of Gehinnom,” but Israelites were “children of the Kingdom,” or, in strictly Rabbinic language, “royal children,” “children of God”, “children of heaven,” “children of the upper chamber,” and “children of the world to come.” In fact, in their view, God had first sat down on his throne as King, when the hymn of deliverance (Exodus 15:1) was raised by Israel--the people which took upon itself that yoke of the Law which all other nations of this world had rejected.

Never could the Judaism of His hearers have received more rude shock than by this inversion of all their cherished beliefs. There was a feast of Messianic fellowship, a recognition on the part of the King of all His faithful subjects, a joyous festive gathering with the fathers of the faith. But this fellowship was not of outward, but of spiritual kinship. There were “children of the Kingdom” and there was an “outer darkness” with its anguish and despair. But this child-ship was of the Kingdom, such as He had opened it to all believers; and that outer darkness was theirs, who had only outward claims to present. So this history of the believing centurion is at the same time an application of the Sermon on the Mount, and a further carrying out of its teaching. Negatively, it is differentiated from Israel; while, positively, it placed the hope of Israel, and fellowship with its promises, within reach of all faith, whether Jew or Gentile. He who taught such new and strange truth could never be called a mere reformer of Judaism. There cannot be “reform” where all the fundamental principles are different. Surely He was the Son of God, the Messiah of men, who, in such surrounding, could so speak to Jew and Gentile of God and his Kingdom. Also and surely He who could bring spiritual life to the dead, could have no difficulty by the same word, “in the self-same hour” to restore life and health to the servant of him, whose faith had inherited the Kingdom. If the teaching of Jesus was new and was true, so must his Work have been also. And in this lies the highest vindication of this miracle--that He is the Miracle.

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6. Read Luke 7:1-10

(1) Matthew 8:5-13

(2) John 4:43-54

Luke 7:1-10

- 1 When he had finished all his words to the people, he entered Capernaum.
- 2 A centurion there had a slave who was ill and about to die, and he was valuable to him.
- 3 When he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and save the life of his slave.
- 4 They approached Jesus and strongly urged him to come, saying, "He deserves to have you do this for him,
- 5 for he loves our nation and he built the synagogue for us."
- 6 And Jesus went with them, but when he was only a short distance from the house, the centurion sent friends to tell him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof.
- 7 Therefore, I did not consider myself worthy to come to you; but say the word and let my servant be healed.
- 8 For I too am a person subject to authority, with soldiers subject to me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come here,' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it."
- 9 When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him and, turning, said to the crowd following him, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith."
- 10 When the messengers returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

Overview from JBC:

See Matthew 8:5-13; John 4:46-53.

This is the only Q section in which the center of interest is an action story rather than a saying of Jesus. Matthew and Luke agree only in the dialogue, but not in the details of the action. There are points of similarity with the stories of Jairus' daughter (Luke 4:40ff.), the official's son (John 4:46-53), and the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:24-30); another section (Matthew 15:21-28) absent from Luke, inclines us to suspect that in the process of oral transmission details and even the pattern of one story merged into the other. A common feature in all, very attractive to the early church, is the way in which Jesus, though physically absent, saves a distressed person by the use of his word. This is heightened in Luke; for in Matthew, the centurion comes personally to Jesus to plead for his servant, but in Luke he sends two delegations, the one of Jewish leaders, the other of friends. If, as seems likely, Matthew more closely represents the original form, then Luke is deliberately adapting his material to the situation of the early church. Throughout Luke Jesus never preaches immediately to the Gentiles; that ministry begins in Acts after Pentecost.

Overview from IB:

The dialogue is almost identical in Luke and in Matthew, but not the narrative framework. The latter in both instances may be secondary, for the saying of Jesus, not his miracle of healing, is still the real climax of the story. John 4:46-53 preserves another variant.

Verse 1:

This is an editorial gloss. "Capernaum" had already been associated in Q

(Matthew 8:5) with the story of the centurion--the only specific geographical note that is known to have stood in that source. (IB)

When he had finished all his words to the people -- Of, "after." This is a reference to the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount (on the Plain), but with nothing concerning the impression produced by the discourse such as is seen in Matthew 7:28. (INT--Robinson)

Both Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10 locate the healing of the centurion's servant in Capernaum where Jesus was after the Sermon on the Mount. (INT--Robinson)
Verse 2:

centurion -- The man was a Gentile (verses 5 and 9), most probably serving under Herod Antipas (3:1). In Matthew, the servant is a paralytic; Luke, who is always conscious of human relations, not only says that the servant is near death, but also states that he "was very dear to" the centurion. The word meaning "very dear" connotes something that can be obtained only at a great price. (JBC)

Verse 9 presupposes--and verse 5 implies--that the "centurion" was a non-Jew. Presumably he was an officer in the Jewish army of Herod Antipas. Read "slave" instead of "servant" throughout, except in verse 7. (IB)

Verses 3-5:

The centurion does not appear in person, as he does in Matthew, but sends a delegation of Jewish elders -- representatives of the local synagogue. They support his plea with a flowing testimonial that has no counterpart in Matthew's version. (IB)

Verse 5:

This verse gives the reason why the elders of the Jews consider him "worthy." He was hardly a proselyte, but was a Roman who had shown his love for the Jews. He had built the synagogue all by himself, and at his own expense. It is held by some archaeologists that the black basalt ruins in Tell Hum are the remains of the very synagogue. Literally, the synagogue, the one which we have, the one for us. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 6-8:

A second delegation--this time of "friends" -- intercepts Jesus on his way to the centurion's "house" and quotes the words that come more naturally in Matthew's version from the lips of the speaker himself. The centurion's reluctance in Luke's account to intrude himself personally on Jesus' attention serves to emphasize his humility, but the idea of intermediaries may well have been borrowed from the story of the healing of Jairus' daughter (8:49), as well as the words "do not trouble yourself." "Set under authority" is a difficult phrase. Another interpretation would help the reader--"exercising authority", but that translation can be justified as a paraphrase, with the implication that God has delegated his authority to Jesus, just as Herod Antipas has conferred his upon the centurion. (IB)

Verse 6:

do not trouble yourself -- the word originally meant to flay or mangle, and then it took on the meaning of annoyance or inconvenience. The Gentile did not want Jesus to become legally unclean by entering his house (John 18:28; Acts 10:14). (JBC)

Jesus had started to go along with the Jewish delegates when the friends of the centurion met them, and stopped Jesus from continuing on the trip, saying the centurion

felt inadequate to be in the presence of Jesus. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 9:

amazed -- Or “marveled.” Only as a man, could Jesus experience this surprise and wonder and so grow in knowledge. (JBC)

turning, ... to the crowd -- Luke delights in citing this reaction of Jesus (7:44; 9:55; 10:22f.; 14:25; 22:61; 23:28). (JBC)

not even in Israel have I found such faith -- Or, “I have not found such great faith in Israel”. The first of many examples of faith in Luke (7:50; 8:25, 48, 50), and as such an element close to Paul’s theology. Matthew has a longer statement, which Luke puts elsewhere (Matthew 8:11f.; Luke 13:28f.). (JBC)

One of the few sayings in the tradition--and no doubt a primitive one--that postulates an interest on Jesus’ part in non-Jews. It is reasonable to assume that the centurion symbolized Gentile Christianity for Luke and his readers, but to press the point that he never meets Jesus in the flesh and received his benefits only through intermediaries is allegory rather than sober exegesis. “Faith” in this instance is belief in Jesus’ wonder-working power. (IB)

A vivid touch not found in Matthew can be found here in Luke. In both Matthew and Luke, Jesus marvels at the great faith of this Roman centurion beyond that found among the Jews. As a military man he had learned how to receive orders and to execute them and hence he expected obedience to his commands. He recognized Jesus as Master over disease with power to compel obedience. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 10:

in good health -- The original Greek word is much stronger than Matthew’s “healed.” It indicates someone able to take full advantage of a vigorous, physical condition. (JBC)

No word of command is given in Luke’s version, but to explain the miracle on any theory of “coincidence” is an unwarranted rationalization. The cure in this case is effected at a distance--a feature of the miracle that appears elsewhere in the Synoptic tradition only in the story of the healing of the Syrophenician woman’s daughter (Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30). In the latter instance, also, the petitioner is a Gentile, whose apt remark induces Jesus to perform a miracle of healing. (IB)

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d. RAISING OF THE WIDOW’S SON

Luke 7:11-17

7. Read Luke 7:11-17
 - (1) I Kings 17:17-24
 - (2) Luke 4:25-26
8. Read Luke 7:11
 - (1) No reference
9. Read Luke 7:12

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------|----------------|
| | (1) I Kings 17:17 | (2) Luke 8:42 |
| 10. | Read Luke 7:13-15 | |
| | (1) No reference | |
| 11. | Read Luke 7:16 | |
| | (1) Luke 1:68 | (2) Luke 19:44 |
| 12. | Read Luke 7:17 | |
| | (1) No reference | |

Luke 7:11-17

- 11 Soon afterward he journeyed to a city called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd accompanied him.
- 12 As he drew near to the gate of the city, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. A large crowd from the city was with her.
- 13 When the Lord saw her, he was moved with pity for her and said to her, "Do not weep."
- 14 He stepped forward and touched the coffin; at this the bearers halted, and he said, "Young man, I tell you, arise!"
- 15 The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.
- 16 Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, exclaiming, "A great prophet has arisen in our midst," and "God has visited his people."
- 17 This report about him spread through the whole of Judea and in all the surrounding region.

Overview from JBC:

This incident only in Luke (cf. 4:25-30; 5:1-11), shows the Evangelist's special delight in portraying Jesus not only overwhelmed with pity at the sight of tragedy but also turning with kindly regard toward women (cf. 7:36-50; 10:38-42). Luke's hand is also evident in the vocabulary, uniquely his own. The episode has literary links with the preceding one: The servant was dear to his master (7:2); this dead youth was his mother's only son. It also prepares for the Baptist's query in 7:20, 22. This narrative possesses the charm, color, and pathos of an excellent story: two large crowds meet, approaching from different directions; the silence with which Jesus touches the bier and stops the funeral procession; the thundering message, calmly spoken, bringing the dead back to life.

Overview from IB:

The story of the centurion from Capernaum was followed in the Q source--if we are to judge from the order of its matter in Luke--by a collection of material about Jesus and John the Baptist. Jesus' answer to John's messengers in the first section of this sequence included the words "the dead are raised up" (verse 22; Matthew 11:5). To

illustrate them Luke prefixed a miracle story from his special source--or one that was known to him in oral form. The OT doublets of Elijah and the son of the widow of Warpath (I Kings 17:17-24) are evidence that similar miracle stories were also at home within Jewish circles. Many interpreters believe that the miracle under discussion, as in the case of John's story of the raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44), has also become the vehicle of symbolism--Jesus' life-giving power.

Verse 11:

Nain -- A village (modern Nein), not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible, two to three hours by foot southeast of Nazareth, and about eight to nine hours southwest of Capernaum. Rock graves are found just east of the city. (JBC)

Nain is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. It has been identified with the modern Nein, a village six miles southeast of Nazareth and three miles northeast of Solem, the Shunamite setting of Elisha's miracle of resurrection. The fact that an ancient cemetery still lies outside its east gate is often, but precariously, cited as an instance of local color. "Only" is twice added elsewhere by Luke to miracle stories taken from his Marcan source (8:42; 9:38). (IB)

his disciples and a large crowd accompanied him -- Or, "went with him." We can picture here the procession of disciples and the crowd with Jesus. Nain is not mentioned elsewhere in the NT. There is today a hamlet about two miles east of Endor on the northern slope of Little Hermon. There is a burying-place still in use. Some think that the very road on which the crowd with Jesus met the funeral procession can be identified. Rock tombs outside the village exist there today. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 12:

The large crowd accompanying the widow may have included not only relatives and friends (bury the dead was a deserving work of mercy), but also hired mourners and musicians. (JBC)

The death of a widow's only son was the greatest misfortune conceivable. The mourning of a widow for an only son is the extremity of grief. There was a considerable crowd among the procession. Some were hired mourners, but the size of the crowd showed the real sympathy of the town for her. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 13:

the Lord -- The title *ho kyrios* is used here for the first time of many times in Luke (for example, 10:1, 41; 11:39; 12:42; 13:15). It is the Greek translation in the LXX for the divine name, Yahweh. It is very appropriately used on this occasion when "Jesus appears clothed with exalted power over life and death by which he becomes the object of his Church's faith and worship. (JBC)

Often love and pity are mentioned as the motives for Christ's miracles (Matthew 14:14; 15:32). (INT--Robinson)

Verses 13-14:

"The Lord" was part of the confession of early Christians, and the church's favorite name for the exalted Christ. The title is never found in the narrative of Mark and Matthew, but occurs often in special Lukan matter, and is frequently employed by Luke himself in editorial introductions. It is characteristic of the late and apocryphal Gospel of Peter. Jesus' motive is one of "compassion." No mention is made of faith on the woman's part. Jesus "touched the bier" to halt the cortege. (IB)

Verse 15:

[sat up](#) -- The Greek word occurs only here and in Acts 9:40 in the NT; its form is very rare in non-biblical Greek except among medical writers. (JBC)

[gave him to his mother](#) -- Identical Greek words occur in the Elijah story of I Kings 17:23; another instance of Luke's intent to present Jesus as Elijah and Elisha revived (I Kings 17:17-24; II Kings 4:17-22, 32-37). (JBC)

Verses 15-16:

The story concludes, according to form, with proof of success of the miracle. The bystanders are convinced that "a great prophet has arisen" with the miracle-working powers of Elijah and Elisha, and that his presence among them is evidence that "God has not forgotten his people." (IB)

Verse 16:

[great prophet](#) -- One of the figures expected in 1st century Palestinian Judaism. (JBC)

Verse 17:

This is an editorial conclusion. "Judea" as in 1:5; 4:44; and 6:17, is the whole of Palestine. (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

As the defilement of a heathen house could not attach to Jesus, whose contact changed the Gentile stranger into a true Israelite, so could the touch of death, not render unclean Him, whose Presence vanquished and changed it into life. Jesus could not enter Nain, and its people pass him to carry one dead to the burying.

It matters little where it was shortly after the healing of the Centurion's servant, or even the very next day that Jesus left Capernaum for Nain. It was probably the day after the healing, and the fact that "many people," or rather "a great multitude", followed him seems to confirm it. The way was long, probably more than twenty-five miles, but even if it was all taken on foot, there could be no difficulty in reaching Nain by the evening, when so often funerals took place. Various roads lead to, and from Nain, that which stretches to the Sea of Galilee and up to Capernaum is quite distinctly marked. Jesus would most probably have approached Nain from the northeast, by Endor. There can be little doubt that the now unfenced burying-ground has been identified as being about ten minute's walk to the east of Nain. On the road leading to it Jesus for the first time burst open the gates of death when he came upon the group carrying the widow's son.

It is all desolate now. A few houses of mud and stone with low doorways, scattered among heaps of stones and traces of walls, is all that remains of what even these ruins show to have once been a city, with walls and gates. The rich gardens are no more; the fruit trees have been cut down; and there is a pitiful sense of desolation about the place, as if the breath of judgment had swept over it. In order to understand the ancient name of Nain, "the pleasant," -- the Rabbis regarded it as fulfilling that part of the promise to Issachar: "He saw the land that it was pleasant." From the elevation on which the city stood we look northwards, across the wide plain, to wooded Tabor, and in the far distance to snow-capped Hermon. On the left (in the west) rise the hills beyond which Nazareth lies embosomed; to the right is Endor; southwards Shunem, and beyond it the Plain of Jezreel. By this path, from Endor, comes Jesus with his disciples and the great following multitude. Here, near the city gate, on the road that leads eastward to the old

burying-ground, has this procession of the "great multitude" which followed Jesus, met that other "great multitude" that followed the dead to his burying. Which of the two shall give way to the other? We know what ancient Jewish usage would have demanded. For, of all the duties enjoined, none were more strictly enforced by every consideration of humanity and piety, even by the example of God Himself, than that of comforting the mourners and showing respect to the dead by accompanying him to the burying. The popular idea was the spirit of the dead hovered about the unburied remains. This must have given intensity to such feelings.

Putting aside later superstitions, so little has changed in the Jewish rites and observances about the dead, that from Talmudic and even earlier sources, we can form a vivid conception of what had taken place at Nain. The watchful anxiety; the vain use of such means as were known, or within reach of the widow; the deepening care, the passionate longing of the mother to retain her one treasure, her sole earthly hope and stay; then the gradual fading out of the light, the farewell, the terrible burst of sorrow; all these would be common features in any such picture. But here we have, besides, the Jewish thoughts of death and after death; knowledge just sufficient to make afraid, but not to give them consolation, which would make even the most pious Rabbi uncertain of the future--childlessness. We can realize it all; how Jewish ingenuity and wisdom would resort to remedies real or magical; how the neighbors would come in with reverent step, feeling as if the very Shekkinah were unseen at the head of the pallet in that humble home; how they would whisper sayings about submission which, when realization of God's love is wanting, seem only to stir the heart to rebellion against absolute power; and how they would resort to the prayers of those who were deemed pious in Nain.

But all was in vain. And now the well-known blast of the horn had carried tidings, that once more the Angel of Death had done his dire will. In passionate grief the mother had rent her upper garment. The last sad offices have been rendered to the dead. The body has been laid on the ground; hair and nails have been cut, and the body washed, anointed, and wrapped in the best linen the widow could provide.

Now the mother was left moaning and lamenting--a term which distinguished the mourning before that after burial. She would sit on the floor, neither eat meat, nor drink wine. What scanty meal she would take must be without prayer, in the house of a neighbor, or in another room, or at least with her back to the dead. Pious friends would render neighborly offices, or busy themselves about the near funeral. If it was deemed duty for the poorest Jew, on the death of his wife, to provide at least two flutes and one mourning woman, we may feel sure that the widowed mother had not neglected what, however incongruous or difficult to procure, might be regarded as the last tokens of affection. In all likelihood the custom obtained even then, although in modified form to have funeral orations at the grave. For, even if charity provided for an unknown wayfarer the simplest funeral, mourning women would be hired to chant in weird strains a lament. From the funeral oration a man's fate in the other world might be inferred, and the "honor of a sage was in his funeral oration." In this sense the Talmud answers the question whether a funeral oration is intended to honor the survivors or the dead.

In all this painful pageantry there was nothing for the heart of the widow, bereft of her only child. We can follow in spirit, the mournful procession, as it started from the desolate house. As it issued, chairs and couches were reversed, and laid low. Outside,

the funeral orator, if such was employed, preceded the bier, proclaiming the good deeds of the dead. Immediately before the dead came the women, this being peculiar to Galilee, the Midrash giving this reason of it, that woman had introduced death into the world. The body was not (as afterwards in preference carried in an ordinary coffin of cedar wood) but rather it was laid on a bier, or in an open coffin. The face of the dead would be uncovered. The body lay with its face turned up, and his hands folded on the breast.

The ends or handles were borne by friends and neighbors, different parties of bearers, all of them unshod, at frequent intervals relieving each other, so that as many as possible might share in the good work. During these pauses there was loud lamentation; but this custom was not observed in the burial of women. Behind the bier walked the relatives, friends, and then the sympathizing "multitude." For it was deemed like mocking one's Creator not to follow the dead to his last resting place, and to all such want of reverence Proverbs 17:5 was applied. If one was absolutely prevented from joining the procession, reverence should at least be shown by rising up before the dead. And so they would go on to what the Hebrews beautifully designated as the "house of assembly" or "meeting", the "place of rest," or "of freedom"; the "field of weepers," the "house of eternity" or "of life."

We can not transport ourselves into that scene. Up from the city close by came this "great multitude" that followed the dead, with lamentations, wild chants of mourning women, accompanied by flutes and the melancholy tinkle of cymbals, perhaps by trumpets, amidst expressions of general sympathy. Along the road from Endor streamed the great multitude which followed the Prince of Life. And it was here that they met-- Life and Death. The connecting link between them was the deep sorrow of the widowed mother. He recognized her as she went before the bier, leading him to the grave whom she had brought into life. He recognized her, but she did not recognize him, had not even seen him. She was still weeping, even after he had hastened a step or two in advance of his followers, quite close to her; she did not heed him, and was still weeping. But, "beholding her," the Lord "had compassion on her." Those bitter, silent tears which blinded her eyes were the strongest language of despair and utmost need, which never in vain appeals to his heart, who has borne our sorrows. By way of contrast, we remember the common formula used at funerals in Palestine, "Weep with them, all you who are bitter at heart." It was not so that Jesus spoke those around, nor to her, but characteristically: "Be not weeping." What he said, he brought about--touching the bier, perhaps the very wicker basket in which the dead lay. He dreaded not the greatest of all defilements, that of contact with the dead, which Rabbinism, in its elaboration of the Law, had surrounded with endless terrors. His was other separation than of the Pharisees; not that of submission to ordinances, but of conquest of what made them necessary.

As he touched the bier, those that bore it stood still. They could not have anticipated what would follow. But the awe of the coming wonder -- the shadow of the opening gates of life -- had fallen on them. One word of sovereign command, "and he that was dead sat up, and began to speak." Not of that world of which he had had a brief glimpse. For, as one who suddenly passes from a dream-vision to waking, in the abruptness of transition, loses what he had seen, so he, who from that dazzling brightness was hurried back to the dim light to which his vision had become accustomed. It must have seemed to him, as if he woke from a long deep sleep. Where was he now? What

was this strange assemblage? Who was he, whose light and life seemed to fall upon him?

Still was Jesus the link between the mother and son, who had again found each other. In the truest sense, "He gave him to his mother." Can any one doubt that mother and son from that moment on loved, trusted, and owned Jesus as the true Messiah? If there was no moral motive for this miracle, outside of Christ's sympathy with intense suffering and the bereavement of death, was there no moral result as the outcome of it? If mother and son had not called upon him before the miracle, would they not from then on and forever more call upon him?

The simplicity and absence of all extravagant details; the Divine calmness and majesty on the part of Jesus are so different from the manner in which legend would have colored the scene. This seems to give evidential truth of the narrative.

On those who saw this miracle at Nain fell the fear of the felt Divine presence, and over their souls swept the hymn of Divine praise: fear, because a great prophet was risen up among them; praise, because God had visited his people. And further and wider spread the wave--over Judea, and beyond it, until it washed, and broke in faint murmur against the prison-walls, within which the Baptist awaited his martyrdom. Was He then "the Coming One?" If so, why did, or how could, these walls keep his messengers within grasp of the tyrant?

Session 13

e. INQUIRY FROM JOHN THE BAPTIST

(1) THE MESSENGERS FROM JOHN THE BAPTIST

Luke 7:18-23
Matthew 11:2-6

1. Read Luke 7:18-23 entirely through one time.
(1) Matthew 11:2-6
2. Read Luke 7:18
(1) No reference
3. Read Luke 7:19
(1) Malachi 3:1 (3) Revelation 4:8
(2) Revelation 1:4, 8
4. Read Luke 7:20-21
(1) No reference
5. Read Luke 7:22
(1) Isaiah 35:5-6 (3) Luke 4:18
(2) Isaiah 61:1
6. Read Luke 7:23
(1) No reference

Luke 7:18-23

- 18 The disciples of John told him about all these things. John summoned two of his disciples
- 19 and sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?"
- 20 When the men came to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?'"
- 21 At that time he cured many of their diseases, sufferings, and evil spirits; he also granted sight to many who were blind.
- 22 And he said to them in reply, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.
- 23 And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me."

Overview from JBC:

See Matthew 11:2-19. This collection of sayings about the Baptist from Q is

given a different location in Luke than in Matthew. Here again we sense the anxiety of the early church, neither to overestimate nor to undervalue the role of John the Baptist.

Overview from IB:

The passage answers a question that must have been of interest to the early Christian community. What did John think of Jesus?

Verse 18:

Luke omits that John is in prison; he had already recorded that fact (3:19f.). (JBC)
all these things -- Or, "all this". The ministry of Jesus, including his cures as well as his preaching; Matthew writes, "the works of Jesus." Against the position of some, the contrast is not between the fierce, eschatological preaching of the Baptist (3:7-18) and Jesus' more gentle style of beatitudes (6:17-49). Jesus himself enunciated strong woes and curses against proud, self-sufficient persons. (JBC)

This verse is an editorial introduction. Various references in the Gospels to the "disciples of John" (5:33; 11:1), the account in Acts 19:1-5 of disciples in Ephesus who had known only "the baptism of John", the polemic of the Gospel of John against John the Baptist and, as some scholars have argued, the sacred literature of the small sect in Iran that still claims John the Baptist as its founder, are evidence of that followers of the Baptist remained independent of the Christian church for a hundred years or more, and were often in competition with it. "All these things" should include Jesus' activities as a teacher as well as a healer. (IB)

The disciples of John told him -- Literally, and his disciples announced to John. Such news was bound to come the ears of the Baptist languishing in the dungeon of Machaerus (Luke 3:20). Luke 7:18-35 runs parallel with Matthew 11:2-19, a specimen of Q, the non-Markan portion of Matthew and Luke. (INT-- Robinson)

Verse 19:

Are you the one who is to come -- Or, "you are the one who is to come?" The emphasis is plainly on the word, "you". Ever since the time of the early Fathers, this question of the Baptist has puzzled commentators. Was he losing faith in Jesus? Since he was not "a reed shaken by the wind" (verse 24), his attitude toward Jesus did not waver. Like Mary (2:48-50), however, he could be surprised and even doubt; but it is difficult to determine the reason. Perhaps it was Jesus' slow accomplishment of Messianic plans; or maybe it was Jesus' failure to identify himself clearly; or even perhaps a personal discouragement like Jeremiah's (Jeremiah 15:10ff.). (JBC)

one who is to come -- This technical term is derived from Malachi 3:1, 23; it designates a figure expected in Palestinian Judaism who should not be too superficially equated with the Messiah. (JBC)

"He who is to come" is the Messiah, not Elijah (as in Matthew 11:14; John 6:14). In his birth narratives Luke had related Jesus by blood to John. In his version of the baptism story he had assumed that John had been made aware of Jesus' messianic mission. But now he incorporates material that is at cross-purposes with his own theory. It is possible that this passage gives the true picture. John may have heard of Jesus for the first time in prison, and only then have suspected that he might be the Messiah. In this case the question was the faint dawn of a real faith, not the dark night of the soul. (IB)

"saying" -- John saying by the two messengers. The message is given precisely as this in Matthew 11:3. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 20-21:

Verse 20 is a repetition that is not necessary in Matthew's form of the narrative. Verse 21 is peculiar to Luke. A demonstration of mighty acts prepares John's disciples for Jesus' answer to their query. (IB)

Verse 21:

"In that hour he cured" -- This item is not in Matthew. Jesus gave the two disciples of John an example of the direct method. They had heard. Then they saw for themselves. Diseases, plagues, evil spirits, all kinds of bodily ills, and he singles out the blind to whom in particular he bestowed sight, gave it as a free gift (grace), the gift of seeing. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 22:

Originally in poetic rhythm. The citations are from Isaiah 61:1 and 35:5-6 (cf. Luke 4:18f.). (JBC)

poor have the good news -- Or, "poor have the gospel". Clearest sign of Jesus' being the Messiah. It is not as though Jesus heals the wealthy but simply preaches the gospel to the poor. The poor are to be identified with the lame, blind, etc, and the gospel always looks forward to the full alleviation and total redemption of God's people. (JBC)

This verse is a catena of phrases from Isaiah 35:5-6 and 61:1 (cf. Luke 4:18), with the addition of "lepers are cleansed" and the "dead are raised up". Jesus' answer is therefore indirect: The signs of the new age which the OT prophet had foretold are in evidence; draw your own conclusions from them! Doubtless Luke understood Jesus' words as a literal appeal to the evidence of the miraculous in his ministry. But they are metaphorical in the OT passage from which they were taken, and Jesus may also have used them figuratively. (IB)

"What things you have seen and heard" -- In Matthew 11:4: "which you do hear and see." Luke mentions no raisings from the dead, but the language is mainly general, while here it is specific. "Scandal" used here has the double notion of to trip up and to entrap, and in the NT also means causing to sin. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 23:

"Who is repelled by nothing in me" is another attempt to render a difficult idiom into modern English speech. The beatitude also presents difficulties of interpretation. Is it a veiled warning that Jesus and his work are not to be ignored? Or a guarded appeal for faith in his person? In either case Jesus avoids any direct assertion of messianic dignity, a feature that this passage shares with all the Synoptic tradition outside the passion narrative. (IB)

Verse 24:

blessed -- Recalls the beatitudes (6:20f.). (JBC)

takes no offense -- Or, "is not scandalized." See comment on Matthew 11:6.

in me -- Or "at me." That is, on account of something that one sees in Jesus, different from one's expectations. This is aimed at John. (JBC)

Summary from LToJC:

We scarcely wonder at the feelings of John's disciples, as months of John the Baptist's weary captivity passed. Uncertain as to what to expect, they seem to have oscillated between Machaerus and Capernaum. Any hope in their Master's vindication and deliverance lay in the possibilities involved in the announcement he had made of

Jesus as the Christ. And it was to Him that their Master's finger had pointed them. Indeed, some of Jesus' earliest and most intimate disciples had come from their ranks; and, as themselves had remarked, the multitude had turned to Jesus even before the Baptist's imprisonment. Yet, could he really be the Christ? There were many things about Him that were strange, and unexplainable. In their view, there must have been a terrible contrast between him who lay in the dungeon at Machaerus, and Him who sat down to eat and drink at feast of the publicans.

Disillusioned--John awaited his fate in that dark dungeon. Surely such a one as Jesus could not have been an imposter, and his own testimony to the Christ could not have been a falsehood, or could it? In that terrible conflict John overcame, as we all must overcome, his very despair opened the door of hope. When John asked the question: "Do we wait for another?" light was already struggling through the darkness. When he sent his disciples straight to Jesus, he had already conquered; for such a question addressed to a possibly false Messiah has no meaning.

The question "Are you the Coming One, or do we wait for another?" indicated faith both in the great promise and in Him to whom it was addressed. The designation "The Coming One", although a most truthful expression of Jewish expectation, was not one ordinarily used of the Messiah. But it was invariably used in reference to the Messianic Age as the coming world, or the coming age. In this, it implied the setting right of all things by the Messiah, the assumption and vindication of his power. In the mouth of John the Baptist it might therefore mean chiefly this: "Are you he that is to establish the Messianic kingdom in its outward power, or have to wait for another?" In that case, the manner in which Jesus answered it would be all the more significant. The messengers came just as he was engaged in healing body and soul. Without interrupting his work, or otherwise noticing their inquiry, he told them to tell John for answer what they had seen and heard. To this, as the inmost characteristic of the Messianic kingdom, he only added, not by way of reproof nor even of warning, but as a fresh "beatitude." "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be scandalized in me." To faith, but only to faith, this was the most satisfactory and complete answer to John's inquiry.

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7. Read Matthew 11:2-6 entirely through one time.
(1) Luke 7:18-28
8. Read Matthew 11:2-4
(1) No reference
9. Read Matthew 11:5
(1) Isaiah 26:19 (3) Isaiah 35:5-6
(2) Isaiah 29:18-19 (4) Isaiah 61:1
10. Read Matthew 11:6
(1) No reference

Matthew 11:2-6

- 2 When John heard in prison of the works of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to him
- 3 with this question, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?"
- 4 Jesus said to them in reply, "Go and tell John what you hear and see:
- 5 the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.
- 6 And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me."

Overview from JBC:

The correspondence between Matthew and Luke (Luke 7:18-23) in this and the following sections, except for Matthew's omissions, is extremely close; these passages are among the best illustrations of Q. The relations between John the Baptist and his followers and between Jesus and his disciples are somewhat uncertain in the traditions. There seems to be little reason for thinking that the question of John was other than sincere, or that he sent his disciples in order to elicit an open profession of messiah-ship either for their sake or for the sake of a wider public. John was quite capable of expressing his own faith to his own disciples. It is more difficult to explain the reasons why John asked the question. With the little information we have about him, we can surmise that the heavy emphasis on the eschatological judgment the Gospels report in John's preaching (see 3:1-10) did not appear in the proclamation of Jesus, and that this caused John to wonder. The messianism and eschatologism of John had to be corrected by the proclamation of Jesus.

Overview from IB:

Matthew does not work out a completely clear explanation of how the old religion is related to the new. He insists that Jesus is the true Messiah of Israel, who was prophesied in the OT, and that the law, as Christ reformulated it, is absolutely valid; but at the same time "the law and the prophets were until John," although in 11:12-13 (=Luke 16:16) he blunts the edge of the Q saying. His uncertainty arises partly because he wishes to include as much of his source material as possible.

John the Baptist actually belongs to the old order. His rite was a "baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" in preparation for the final judgment and the dawn of the new age. Josephus (*Antiquities*. 18. 5. 2.) in no way connects him with Jesus. The Q source here pictures him as uncertain about Jesus' significance. Disciples of John are mentioned several times in the NT (for example, Luke 11:1; John 1:35; 3:25), and Acts (18:25; 19:1-4) knows of those who had received only the baptism of John. There is some evidence that after John's death his disciples continued as a separate Jewish party or sect outside the Christian church, and this may explain why the Gospel of John insists in every possible way that John was nothing more than Jesus' forerunner.

How closely was Jesus' work, at the beginning, connected with that of his predecessor? This passage indicates that although his mission was different, it was in some sense a continuation of John's. He speaks of John in terms of the greatest praise, and on another occasion he couples his own authority with that of John (21:23-27). A rite of baptism became a permanent feature of Christianity. Jesus must have begun co-

operating with the Baptist, but striking new elements were soon exhibited in his teaching and activities.

Verse 2:

John ... in prison -- Matthew postpones the explanation of John's imprisonment until the story of his death (14:3-12). According to Josephus (*Antiquities*. 18. 5, 2. & 119), the prison was in the palace fortress of Machaerus, built by Herod the Great on the desolate heights of Moab near the East central shore of the Dead Sea (*Jewish Wars*, 4.6, 1-2 & 164-77). (JBC)

"The coming one" -- This title is not attested in Jewish literature for the Messiah, but there could be no doubt of its meaning (Malachi 3:1). (JBC)

The parallel Luke 7:18 does not say that this occurred when John was "in prison." (IB)

"John heard in the prison" -- probably (Luke 7:18) about the raising of the son of the widow of Nain. The word for prison here is the place where one was kept bound (Acts 5:21, 23; 16:26). It was in Machaerus east of the Dead Sea which at this time belonged to the rule of Herod Antipas (Josephus. *Antiquities*. 18. 5. 2). John's disciples had access to him. So he sent word by (not duo as in Luke 7:19) them to Jesus. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 3:

"He who is to come" -- This may be a technical term for the expected redeemer (cf. 3:11; Daniel 7:13; Hebrews 10:37; Revelation 1:4). It is also found in the liturgies of the Mandaeans, a Gnostic sect which regarded John the Baptist as messiah. (IB)

"He that comes" -- This phrase refers to the Messiah (Mark 11:9; Luke 13:35; Hebrews 10:37; Psalm 118:26; Daniel 7:13). Some rabbis applied the phrase to some forerunner of the kingdom. Was there to be "another" -- after Jesus? John had been in prison long enough to develop a prison mood. It was once clear enough to him, but his environment was depressing and Jesus had done nothing to get him out of Machaerus. John longed for reassurance. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 4:

Matthew has omitted (or Luke has added) a recital of miracles performed in the presence of the disciples of John; this certainly adds vividness to the quotations in which Jesus answers the questions. (JBC)

"The things which you do hear and see" -- This symbolical message was for John to interpret, not for them. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 4-5:

"What you hear and see" -- are the wonders which Jesus performed in chapters 8-9, and which the disciples were commanded to do also. Jewish writers believed that in the messianic age all sickness would be healed. The Q writer probably regarded these miracles as the fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah 35:5-6; 61:1-2. The latter passage begins by promising that the good news will be announced to the lowly, and in these verses the good news is the climax. Jesus interpreted his great works as a sign that the new age was dawning, but most important of all was the "good news to the poor." (IB)

Verse 5:

This verse is not actually a quotation either according to the MT or according to the LXX but it is a cento of allusions from Isaiah 29:18-19; 35:5-6; 61:1. The raising of

the dead is added in Q; it replaces the liberation of captives in Isaiah 61:1. The answer of Jesus, although it is not a formal claim of messiah-ship, alludes to phenomena that in the OT and Judaism were expected in the Messianic era. More important, the quotations establish the type of messiah-ship that Jesus lets those see who will look. It is not a messiah-ship of the eschatological judgment of wrath, nor the establishment of a Messianic empire over all the kingdoms of the earth, nor a war of extermination against the enemies of the elect people. The messiah-ship here suggested is a messiah-ship of the healing of ills and the conferring of blessing. (JBC)

“And the dead are raised up” -- Like that of the son of the widow on Nain. Did he raise the dead also on this occasion? Tell John your story over again and remind him of these prophetic texts: Isaiah 35:5; 61:1. The items are convincing enough and clearer than mere eschatological symbolism. “The poor” in particular have the gospel, the climax.

Verse 6:

“not to be scandalized” -- The “scandal” is anything over which one stumbles and falls; the use both of the noun and the verb in the NT is exclusively metaphorical to designate something that makes faith difficult; see 18:6-9. That this type of messiah-ship was a scandal even to the disciples of Jesus is abundantly clear from the Gospels. (JBC)

“He who takes no offense at me” is literally “anyone who is not scandalized” or “caused to stumble” by me. The Greek word usually means “to lead into sin” or “to cause someone to stumble and fall” (Malachi 2:8; Romans 9:32-33; I Corinthians 8:13), and thus to be turned aside from the straight way of righteousness. Jewish moral teachers thought of life as a journey, and gave the name “halakah,” that is, the way to walk, to directions for conduct. In this context the saying must mean: “It is not necessary for John to understand and acknowledge the full meaning of these events; I shall be content if he does not join my opponents in condemning my ministry. Anyone who looks on this work with friendly eyes is blessed.” (IB)

“Whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me” -- This beatitude is a rebuke to John for his doubt, even though in prison. Doubt is not a proof of superior intellect, scholarship, or piety. John was in a fog, and that is the time not to make serious decisions. In some way even the Baptist had found some occasion of stumbling in Jesus. (INT--Robinson)

* * * * *

(2) JESUS' TESTIMONY TO JOHN

Luke 7:24-35
Matthew 11:7-19

11. Read Luke 7:24-35 entirely through one time.
 - (1) No reference
12. Read Luke 7:24-30
 - (1) Matthew 11:7-15

13. Read Luke 7:24-25
(1) No reference
14. Read Luke 7:26
(1) Luke 1:76
15. Read Luke 7:27
(1) Malachi 3:1 (2) Isaiah 40:3
16. Read Luke 7:28
(1) No reference
17. Read Luke 7:29-30
(1) Matthew 21:32 (2) Luke 3:7, 12
18. Read Luke 7:31-35
(1) Matthew 11:16-19
19. Read Luke 7:31-33
(1) No reference
20. Read Luke 7:34
(1) Luke 15:2
21. Read Luke 7:35
(1) No reference

Luke 7:24-35

- 24 When the messengers of John had left, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John. "What did you go out to the desert to see--a reed swayed by the wind?
- 25 Then what did you go out to see? Someone dressed in fine garments? Those who dress luxuriously and live sumptuously are found in royal palaces.
- 26 Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.
- 27 This is the one about whom scripture says: 'Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, he will prepare your way before you.'
- 28 I tell you, among those born of women, no one is greater than John; yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."
- 29 (All the people who listened, including the tax collectors, and who were baptized with the baptism of John, acknowledged the righteousness of God;
- 30 but the Pharisees and scholars of the law, who were not baptized by him, rejected the plan of God for themselves.)
- 31 "Then to what shall I compare the people of this generation? What are they like?
- 32 They are like children who sit in the marketplace and call to one another, 'We played the flute for you, but you did not dance. We sang a dirge, but you did not

- weep.'
- 33 For John the Baptist came neither eating food nor drinking wine, and you said, 'He is possessed by a demon.'
- 34 The Son of Man came eating and drinking and you said, 'Look, he is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.'
- 35 But wisdom is vindicated by all her children."

Overview of verses 24-30 from IB:

The belief was current in late Judaism that Elijah was to reappear "in the last days" as a forerunner of the Messiah. According to one Christian tradition (Matthew 11:13-14), Jesus had identified John the Baptist as this Elijah redivivus. According to another (John 1:21), the Baptist himself had rejected the identification. In the form in which have it our passage supports the affirmative in this debate.

Verse 24:

"What did you go out to the desert to see -- A piercing question. Did you look for what you expected to find? Or for what would appeal to you? (JBC)

"when the messengers of John were departed" -- Matthew 11:7 suggests that Jesus began his eulogy of John as soon as the messengers (angels, Luke calls them) were on their way. The vivid questions about the people's interest in John are precisely alike in both Matthew and Luke. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 24-25:

No doubt many of Jesus' hearers had first been stirred by the preaching of John. Jesus' questions are ironical and metaphorical. "Did you expect to find some cringing timeserver in the desert, some self-indulgent man of ease?" (IB)

Verse 25:

"Gorgeously appaeled" -- In splendid clothing. "And live delicately" -- From a Greek word meaning to break down, to enervate, an old word for luxurious living. "In kings' courts"--Matthew 11:8 has "the kings' house." (INT--Robinson)

Verse 26:

"A prophet" -- a real prophet will always get a hearing if he has a message from God. He is a fore-speaker, forth-teller. He may or may not be a fore-teller. The main thing is for the prophet to have a message from God which he is willing to tell at whatever cost to himself. The word of God came to John in the wilderness of Judea (Luke 3:2). That made him a prophet. There is a prophetic element in every real preacher of the Gospel. Real prophets become leaders and molders of men. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 26-27:

The obvious answer is "No!" They had gone out to see "a prophet" -- a man who would preach austerity to others and practice it himself. But John was "more than a prophet". The formula "it is written" introduces a quotation from scripture in early Christian literature, but what follows it in this instance has no exact counterpart in the OT. It appears to be an adaptation to messianic doctrine of the LXX text of Malachi 3:1: "Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare a way before my fact." The change in personal pronouns makes the "quotation" refer to a herald of the Messiah rather than to a precursor of God -- identified as Elijah in Malachi 4:4-5. The same "quotation" also appears in Mark 1:2, where it is erroneously credited to Isaiah. Such a free paraphrase

may have been pre-Christian, and it would be arbitrary exegesis to deny that Jesus could have used it. But the connection between verses 26 and 28 is improved by its omission, and it is probably a christological proof text that was given its present setting by an early controversialist in order that the passage as a whole might support one Christian definition of John the Baptist's relationship to Jesus. But the addition, if it is such, must have been made very early, for the verse already stood in the Q source (cf. Matthew 11:10). (IB)

Verse 27:

This quotation from Malachi 3:1 (and Exodus 23:20 [LXX]) is adapted from an announcement of God's coming to that of Jesus'. Luke deliberately omits the explicit comparison of the Baptist with Elijah (Matthew 11:14). (JBC)

Verse 28:

among those born of women, no one is greater -- Or "none born of woman is greater ...". We sense a finality in Jesus' words: John may have been the greatest of all prophets and patriarchs, but a new and final epoch has begun with Jesus. How much more fortunate are those who belong to it! (JBC)

"John" marked a watershed in history. He was the last among the great of the old dispensation. But a new order has begun, and "he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." This is one of several kingdom references in the gospel tradition that show that Jesus thought of the new age of God's rule as a fact of present experience as well as the climactic event of the historical process. (IB)

Verse 29:

"justified God" -- They considered God just or righteous in making these demands of them. Even the publicans did. They submitted to the baptism of John. Some writers consider verses 29-30 as a comment of Luke in the midst of the eulogy of John by Jesus. This would be a remarkable thing for so long a comment to be interjected. It is perfectly proper as the saying of Jesus. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 29-30:

The parenthetical comment in these verse emphasize the probability that they are to be interpreted, not as part of Jesus' discourse, but as Luke's own comment on the reaction of Jesus' audience to it. "Justified God"; that is, "acknowledged that God's plan was just." Luke often speaks of "lawyers" instead of "scribes" for the benefit of his Gentile readers. (IB)

Verse 30:

"rejected for themselves" -- These legalistic interpreters of the Law refused to admit the need of confession of sin on their part and so set aside the baptism of John. They annulled God's purposes of grace so far as they applied to them. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 29-35:

The first two verses here are a commentary, proper to Luke (cf. Matthew 21:31f.). In their baptism of *metanoia* (3:8) sinners expressed their faith that God would redeem them and through the Messiah reunite them to himself. Thus would God's promises or "purpose be justified."

Verse 31:

"And to what are they like?" -- This second question is not in Matthew 11:16. This sharpens the point. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 31-35:

Jesus does not want to contrast himself with John, nor his own followers with those of the Baptist; he is pointing out the childish indecisiveness of the people. (JBC)
wisdom -- God's plan of salvation. Matthew identifies wisdom with Jesus, but Luke deliberately associates it with the publicans and sinners in 29f. Notice the inclusion between 29f. and 35; the double use of "justified"; and the parallel between "purpose" and "wisdom." (JBC)

Interpreters are prone to allegorize. A parable is a story intended to make only one point clear and memorable. It is not a code in which each detail in one system has a counterpart in another. We must not look for any correspondence between the details of this parable and those of its application. In fact the two may originally have been independent in the tradition of Jesus. (IB)

Verses 31-32:

Jesus' parables, as well as those in the rabbinical tradition, were often introduced by a double question. "The men of this generation" are compared with "children" who cannot agree on a game. The quotation should be punctuated as two separate statements. One group wishes to play "weddings," the other "funerals," and neither proposal is mutually acceptable. The parable reflects the discouragement that Jesus often experienced in his ministry, but he lightens it with a touch of humor. (IB)

Verse 32:

"And you did not weep" -- Here Matthew has "and you did not mourn (or beat your breast). They all did it at funerals. These children would not play wedding nor funeral. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 33-35:

"John the Baptist" was criticized for practicing asceticism, and Jesus for his failure to do so. Luke found "Son of man" in the Q source (cf. Matthew 11:19), but this apocalyptic title may be a Christian substitution for an original "I". The "children of wisdom" must be the "people and the tax collectors" of verse 29. By their attitude toward John and Jesus they have shown that God's wisdom, which spoke through these messengers, is right and true. Matthew reads "deeds" instead of "children," and no satisfactory explanation of this divergence in the tradition has been advanced.

Verse 33:

"John the Baptist is come" -- Luke alone has "bread" and "wine." Otherwise, these verses are like Matthew 11:18, 19. There are actually critics today who say that Jesus was called the friend of sinners and even of harlots because he loved them and their ways and so deserved the slur cast upon him by his enemies. If men can say that today we need not wonder that the Pharisees and lawyers said it then to justify their own rejection of Jesus. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 35:

"Of all her children" -- Here Matthew 11:19 has "by her works." The use of "children" personifies wisdom as in Proverb 8:1 - 9:18. (INT--Robinson)

* * * * *

22. Read Matthew 11:7-19 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference

23. Read Matthew 11:7
(1) Matthew 3:3, 5
24. Read Matthew 11:8-9
(1) No reference
25. Read Matthew 11:10
(1) Exodus 23:30 (3) Mark 1:2
(2) Malachi 3:1 (4) Luke 1:76
26. Read Matthew 11:11
(1) No reference
27. Read Matthew 11:12
(1) Luke 16:16
28. Read Matthew 11:13
(1) No reference
29. Read Matthew 11:14
(1) Malachi 3:23 (3) Luke 1:17
(2) Matthew 17:10-13
30. Read Matthew 11:15-17
(1) No reference
31. Read Matthew 11:16-19
(1) Luke 7:31-35
32. Read Matthew 11:18
(1) Luke 1:15
33. Read Matthew 11:19
(1) Matthew 9:10-11

Matthew 11:7-19

- 7 As they were going off, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out to the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind?
- 8 Then what did you go out to see? Someone dressed in fine clothing? Those who wear fine clothing are in royal palaces.
- 9 Then why did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.
- 10 This is the one about whom it is written: 'Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way before you.'
- 11 Amen, I say to you, among those born of women there has been none greater than

- John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.
- 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent are taking it by force.
- 13 All the prophets and the law prophesied up to the time of John.
- 14 And if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah, the one who is to come.
- 15 Whoever has ears ought to hear.
- 16 "To what shall I compare this generation? It is like children who sit in marketplaces and call to one another,
- 17 'We played the flute for you, but you did not dance, we sang a dirge but you did not mourn.'
- 18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they said, 'He is possessed by a demon.'
- 19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they said, 'Look, he is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is vindicated by her works."

Overview from JBC:

Except for the insertion of 11:12 (=Luke 16:16) from a different context, Matthew and Luke still are very close. The witness of Jesus to John is given both to John's manner of life and to his genuine prophetic mission.

Overview from IB:

The kernel of this section is found in verses 7-9, 11; and verses 12-14 are based on a separate saying about John, which is also found in Luke 16:16. (IB)

Verse 7:

Manuscripts of the NT were originally written without punctuation. Editors, when they punctuate, are dependent on ancient commentators and their own reasoning. If the question marks are placed differently, the Greek reads: "Why did you go out into the wilderness? To gaze at a reed shaken by the wind?" This makes good sense, and fits better with the punctuation and translation adopted by RSV in verses 8-9. Just as the crowds did not make the journey into the Jordan Valley merely to look at reeds blowing in the wind, which can always be seen there, so they were not led there by a man of weak and wavering character. The evangelists no doubt take this to mean also that John, despite his question in verse 3, cannot really doubt Jesus. (IB)

"As these went their way" -- The eulogy of Jesus was spoken as the two disciples of John were going away. Is it a matter of regret that they did not hear this wondrous praise of John that they might cheer him with it? It may almost be called the funeral oration of the Baptist, for not long afterwards Herodias compassed his death. "A reed shaken by the wind" -- used of the reeds that grew in plenty in the Jordan Valley where John preached, of a staff made of a reed (Matthew 27:29), as a measuring rod (Revelation 11:1), of a writer's pen (III John 1:13). The reeds by the Jordan bent with the wind, but not so John. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 8:

No one could imagine that John was the sort of man who was accustomed to live luxuriously. The crowds went out, not to see an aristocrat or a pretender to the kingship, but one like an OT prophet in character and appearance. If they had the perception and

moral earnestness to accept John, they should accept the greater events that are now taking place. (IB)

Verse 9:

[To see a prophet?](#) -- In Jewish belief prophecy had ended with the closing of the canon of the prophetic books, and the next prophet to appear would be the prophet "like Moses" (Deuteronomy 18:15) (JBC)

"And much more than a prophet" -- comparative though meaning exceeding (surrounded by, overflowing). John had all the great qualities of the true prophet: vigorous moral conviction, integrity, strength of will, fearless zeal for truth and righteousness. And then he was the forerunner of the Messiah (Malachi 3:1). (INT--Robinson)

Verses 9-10:

The crowds took John to be "a prophet," but he was "more than a prophet." Verse 10, which is probably a very early addition to the tradition, explains that he was, in fact, the messenger of the covenant (cf. verse 14). The quotation from Malachi 3:1 seems to be translated directly from the Hebrew. It has been Christianized by substituting "thy" for "my" to make it refer directly to Jesus. (IB)

Verse 10:

This is clearly the meaning of the witness that Jesus gives to John; Jesus applies to John the text of Malachi 3:1 (quoted according to the MT), one of the texts on which the belief in the "Coming One" was based. This makes John the last and the greatest of the prophets; but Jesus calls him even more: the greatest figure of the dispensation of the Law and the prophets. By implication John is greater even than Moses. (JBC)

Verse 11:

[is greater than he](#) -- John lived and worked before the reign. Therefore, even the least in the reign, who will have the light of the gospel and the communication of the power of faith, will accomplish greater works than John. (JBC)

"those born of women" is simply another way of saying "human beings." Nowhere else in the tradition does Jesus call him "John the Baptist." An earlier title was "the baptizer" (Mark 1:4). "He who is least in the kingdom of heaven" cannot refer to those who will be in the kingdom when it is manifested completely. In that case John and all the prophets would be excluded, and Jesus never doubts that they will share in the world to come. Therefore, the saying refers to Jesus' disciples, who are experiencing the "first fruits" of the kingdom. They are "greater," not in their moral character or achievements, but in their privileges. This is one of the most important of those sayings which indicate that the kingdom is already present. (IB)

"He that is but little" -- the Authorized Version here has it better, "he that is least." The paradox of Jesus has puzzled many. He surely means that John is greater than all others in character, but that the least in the kingdom of heaven surpasses him in privilege. John is the end of one age, "until John" (Malachi 11:14), and the beginning of the new era. All those that come after John stand upon his shoulders. John is the mountain peak between the old and the new. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 12:

This verse is obscure in both Matthew and Luke (16:16); and it is hard to say whether Luke has compressed a difficult sentence or Matthew has expanded it to explain

it. It may mean either “the reign does violence” or “the reign suffers violence.” In the first meaning the reign is said to make a violent entrance into the world (see 10:34), and those seize it as a prize who are willing to be as violent as the reign demands--by the kind of renunciation Jesus imposes upon his disciples. Many interpreters find this sense somewhat forced; they prefer to say simply that the reign has always been under attack of its enemies and is now under attack. This interpretation does not fit well with the word “snatch” or “carry off” -- a word that is used in Greek of taking plunder. Another possibility relates the verse to the contemporary scene and identifies the violent with the party of the Zealots, who sought to establish the reign by violence. No proposed interpretation is entirely satisfactory. Matthew’s interpretation of the discourse, because of the occurrence of the name of John in 11:12, is somewhat violent itself. (JBC)

“Suffers violence” -- This verb occurs only here and in Luke 16:16 in the NT. The idea is that the kingdom is forced, is stormed, is taken by men of violence like men of violence take it by force or seize it like a conquered city. Or it may mean “experiences violence” or “forces its way” like a rushing mighty wind. These difficult words of Jesus mean that the preaching of John had led to a violent and impetuous thronging to gather round Jesus and his disciples. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 12-13:

Matthew’s form of this saying may mean: (1) “From John’s time until now, the kingdom [that is, the Christian movement, or God’s people] has been oppressed, and the oppressors are still ravaging it. The law and the prophets were until John, but with the fulfillment of their prophecy came persecution also.” In this case Matthew interprets the saying as referring to event of his own time. The oppressors may be earthly rulers or demonic powers. Or the passage may mean: (2) “From John’s time until now, zealots or revolutionists have sought to seize God’s kingdom [that is, they have tried to establish his sovereignty by forceful means] and by so doing they are only ravaging it.” This does not fit well with the present form of verse 13, but otherwise has much to commend it. The stories of revolts in first-century Palestine can be read in Josephus (*Antiquities*. 18. 1. 6; 20. 5; 20. 8. 5-7. 10; *Jewish War*. 2. 8. 1; 2. 12. 4; 2. 13. 2-7). Or (3) “From John’s time until now, the kingdom is exercising its own spiritual force, and men of spiritual force are able to lay hold of it, for the law and the prophets were until John, but now the new age has come.” Although this interpretation is daring, it does bring out the contrast between the old and the new. (IB)

The saying in Q may have read: “The law and the prophets were until John; since then the Kingdom of God (‘suffers violence’ or ‘exercises its power’). All we can be sure of is that the saying contrasted the previous age with the new and spoke of violent power in connection with the kingdom. (IB)

Verse 13:

[prophesied up to the time of John](#) -- Or, “prophesied until John”. Matthew returns to the topic, reaffirming that John terminates the Law and the prophets. (JBC)

Verse 14:

[he is Elijah](#) -- Cf. Malachi 3:1, 22. Elias redivivus. The messianic prophet was sometimes identified with Elijah returning. Elijah had never died but was carried off in a chariot (II Kings 2:11-12). This statement is repeated in 17:10-13 in a longer form. (JBC)

The messenger of the covenant, alluded to in verse 10, is now explicitly identified with Elijah. According to Malachi 4:5, Elijah would return before the day of the Lord. Some first-century Jews believed that Elijah had been hidden by God until the time of his return (Josephus. *Antiquities*. 9. 2. 2); and Justin Martyr speaks of a Jewish belief that Elijah would announce the Messiah. Here and elsewhere Matthew expresses the Christian doctrine that John is Elijah (cf. 17:12-13). He does not necessarily mean he is identical with the earlier prophet; he simply exercises his functions and fulfills the prophecies regarding him. (IB)

“This is Elijah” -- Jesus here endorses John as the promise of Malachi. The people understood Malachi 4:1 to mean the return of Elijah in person. This John denied as to himself (John 1:21). But Jesus affirms that John is the Elijah of promise who has come already (Matthew 17:12). He emphasizes the point: “He that has ears to hear, let him hear.” (INT--Robinson)

Verse 15:

Whoever has ears ought to hear -- Or, “let him who has ears hear”. A tag used when a cryptic saying is proposed. It was a sign of the wise man that he could speak in riddles and solve them. (JBC)

Matthew has inserted this saying at this point. It is commented on at 13:9. (IB)

Verses 16-19:

The first indication in Matthew of a wide disbelief in the proclamation of Jesus. It is the sole indication of remarks directed against John the Baptist, respect for whom is attested both in the Gospels and in Josephus (*Antiquities*. 18. 5. 2). Jesus and John followed quite diverse manners of life. John was a hermit who reduced his use of material goods to an absolute minimum; Jesus, although he was poor and preached renunciation, made no similar radical departure from the usual manner of life of the Jews. The austere prophet was called a demoniac; the rabbi who lived much like other rabbis was called a glutton and a drunkard who liked low company. No approach could satisfy the Jews if it suggested a change in their belief and their life. Jesus uses the homely parable of children who always want to play some other game than the one suggested by their companions. (JBC)

Verse 17:

“Children sitting in the market places” -- This parable of the children playing in the market place is given also in Luke 7:31f. Had Jesus as a child in Nazareth not played games with children? He had certainly watched them often since. The interest of Christ in children was keen. He has really created the modern child’s world out of the indifference of the past. They would not play wedding or funeral in a peevish fret. These metaphors in the Gospels are vivid to those with eyes to see. The agora was originally the assembly, then the forum or public square where the people gathered for trade or for talk as in Athens (Acts 17:17) and in many modern towns. As in the Roman Forum. The oriental bazaars today are held in streets rather than public squares. Even today with all the automobiles children play in the streets. In English the word “cheap” meant only barter and price, not cheap in our sense. The word for mourn means to beat the heart, directly in the middle, after the fashion of eastern funeral lamentations. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 19:

“wisdom is justified by her works” -- The word “justified” means “set right” Luke

(7:35) has “by all her children” as some manuscripts have here to make Matthew like Luke. These words are difficult, but understandable. God’s wisdom has planned the different conduct of both John and Jesus. He does not wish all to be just alike in everything. “This generation” is childish, not childlike, and full of whimsical inconsistencies in their fault finding. They exaggerate in each case. John did not have a demon, and Jesus was not a glutton or wine bibber. And, worse than either, for the Greek word used here is done so as to imply a sinister sense and it further implies that Jesus was the comrade of the worst characters, and like them in conduct. A malicious nickname at first, it is now a name of honor: the sinner’s lover. Cf. Luke 15:2. The plan of God is justified by its results. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 19b:

[wisdom is vindicated by her works](#) -- Or, “wisdom is justified by her deeds.” Another obscure saying. It is probably proverbial and would make good sense in the wisdom tradition, in which wisdom is proved genuine both by the success of the wise man (Proverbs 3:13-18) and by the wisdom he teaches his children (Proverbs 10:1). But precisely what Jesus means by wisdom here is not clear. Most obviously it is the divine wisdom, which in one reading proves itself by its works and in the other reading by those who accept it--here, the disciples of Jesus. Some interpreters think that the church has formed the saying and that Jesus himself is meant by wisdom. He too is proved both by his deeds and by his disciples. Luke 7:35 reads “by her children”, a reading that has also contaminated the Mattaeian manuscript tradition. (JBC)

Session 14

i. ANOINTING OF JESUS

Luke 7:36-50

56. Read Luke 7:36-50 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference
57. Read Luke 7:36
(1) Luke 11:37 (2) Luke 14:1
58. Read Luke 7:37
(1) Matthew 26:7 (2) Mark 14:3
59. Read Luke 7:37-38
(1) John 12:3
60. Read Luke 7:39-47
(1) No reference
61. Read Luke 7:48
(1) Matthew 9:20 (3) Luke 5:20
(2) Mark 2:5
62. Read Luke 7:49
(1) Luke 5:21
63. Read Luke 7:50
(1) No reference

Luke 7:36-50

- 36 A Pharisee invited him to dine with him, and he entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at table.
- 37 Now there was a sinful woman in the city who learned that he was at table in the house of the Pharisee. Bringing an alabaster flask of ointment,
- 38 she stood behind him at his feet weeping and began to bathe his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the ointment.
- 39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner."
- 40 Jesus said to him in reply, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Tell me, teacher," he said.
- 41 "Two people were in debt to a certain creditor; one owed five hundred days' wages and the other owed fifty.

- 42 Since they were unable to repay the debt, he forgave it for both. Which of them will love him more?"
- 43 Simon said in reply, "The one, I suppose, whose larger debt was forgiven." He said to him, "You have judged rightly."
- 44 Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? When I entered your house, you did not give me water for my feet, but she has bathed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair.
- 45 You did not give me a kiss, but she has not ceased kissing my feet since the time I entered.
- 46 You did not anoint my head with oil, but she anointed my feet with ointment.
- 47 So I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; hence, she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little."
- 48 He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."
- 49 The others at table said to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"
- 50 But he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."
-

Overview from JBC:

See John 12:1-8; Mark 14:3-9; Matthew 26:6-13. Not only is the Lucan narrative of this episode ensnared with difficulties, but a comparison of it with a similar story in the other Gospels compounds the problem: (1) In Luke, the story centers around an unnamed, sinful woman; in Mark and Matthew, the woman in no way is presumed to be sinful; in John her name is Mary. (2) In Luke, the host is Simon the Pharisee; in Mark, Simon; in Matthew, Simon the Leper; in John, it takes place at a house where Mary served Lazarus reclined at table. (3) In Luke, it happens north in Galilee; in the other three Gospels, down south in Bethany. (4) In Luke and John, she anoints the feet of Jesus; in Mark and Matthew, his head. (5) In Mark, Matthew, and John, there is a complaint about the waste, and Jesus replies that this is done for his burial. (6) In Luke, it happens in the early part of the ministry; in Mark and Matthew, two days before the final Passover; in John, six days before.

Evidently, during the period of oral transmission, details of one story passed over into another. Each evangelist, and especially Luke, may have further refashioned the story: Luke could have added the parable (verses 40-41) where he mentions the name of Simon for the first time.

Overview from IB:

Luke made a place for this story because it illuminated the grounds for the charge in verse 34 that Jesus was "a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners." Jesus' concern for social and religious outcasts is a leading interest in Luke's special tradition. Where there are no parallel documents for comparison, source analysts is admittedly hypothetical. Nevertheless there is good reason for assuming that Luke has woven together two distinct traditions: a story in verses 36-40, 44-47a, and a parable in verse 41-43. Verses 48-50 introduce a new motif, and are possibly Luke's own composition. The point of the story is that one who loves much is forgiven much. It is possible the story is a doublet of the one in Mark 14:3-9. Luke omitted the latter when he come to it in the course of composition. But the differences are more striking than the

similarities, and it may have been Luke himself who borrowed “Simon” from the Marcan narrative as a name for Jesus’ host, and took from it the details of the “alabaster flask”, the ointment, and the anointing in verses 37, 38, 46. These details introduce an element of premeditation into an act that is more naturally interpreted as spontaneous and impulsive.

Verse 36:

[A Pharisee](#) -- Or, “one of the Pharisees.” Because of the hospitality of the Pharisaic sect to Jesus, it was courageous of this one to invite Jesus to dinner. Not only does Luke frequently present Jesus as a dinner guest (5:29; 10:38; 19:5) but on three occasions his host is a Pharisee (7:36; 11:37; 14:1). Luke has just spoken of the Son of Man eating and drinking; this provides the proper setting for the present incident. (JBC)

No doubt Jesus numbered friendly Pharisees among his acquaintances (cf. 13:31), and twice elsewhere Luke speaks of Jesus at dinner in a “Pharisee’s house” (11:37; 14:1). But these instances of Pharisaic hospitality may be a literary device rather than a historical reminiscence, for on each occasion the host or his colleagues come in for criticism. (IB)

“That he would eat with him” -- Luke has two other instances of Pharisees who invited Jesus to meals (Luke 11:37; 14:1) and he alone gives them. This is the Gospel of Hospitality. Jesus would dine with a Pharisee or with a publican (Luke 5:29; Mark 2:15; Matthew 9:10) and even invited himself to be the guest of Zaccheus (Luke 9:5). This Pharisee was not as hostile as the leaders in Jerusalem. It is not necessary to think that this Pharisee had any sinister motive in his invitation although he was not overly friendly. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 32: (?)

“and behold” -- The opening words demand attention and register surprise. Luke delicately does not name the woman, simply characterizes her as a sinner (a prostitute, or else a woman married to a man considered an outcast, like a publican). The woman’s name is certainly not Mary of Magdala (8:2), nor is there reason to identify her with the sister of Lazarus (John 12:3). (JBC)

Verse 37:

“A woman which was in the city, a sinner” -- Probably in Capernaum. The meaning is “Who was of such a character as to be” (cf. Luke 8:3) and so she was more than merely “who was a sinner in the city,” a woman of the town, in other words, and known to be such. The Greek word means to sin, as being devoted to sin. It is false and unjust to Mary Magdalene, introduced as a new character in Luke 8:2, to identify this woman with her. Luke would have no motive in concealing her name here and the life of a courtesan would be incomparable with the sevenfold possession of demons. Still worse is it to identify this courtesan not only with Mary Magdalene, but also with Mary of Bethany simply because it is a Simon who gives there a feast to Jesus when Mary of Bethany does a beautiful deed somewhat like this one here (Mark 14:3-9; Matthew 26:6-13; John 12:2-8). Certainly Luke knew full well the real character of Mary of Bethany (John 10:38-42) so beautifully pictured by him. But a falsehood, once started, seems to have more lives than the cat’s proverbial nine. The very name Magdalene has come to mean a repentant courtesan. But we can at least refuse to countenance such a slander on Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany. This sinful woman had undoubtedly repented

and changed her life and wished to show her gratitude to Jesus who had rescued her. Her bad reputation as a harlot clung to her and made her an unwelcome visitor in the Pharisee's house. "When she knew" -- to know fully, to recognize. She came in by a curious custom of the time that allowed strangers to enter a house uninvited at a feast, especially beggars seeking a gift. This woman was an intruder whereas Mary of Bethany was an invited guest. A dinner has been described by one who spent time in the area under discussion: "Many came in and took their places on the side seats, uninvited and yet unchallenged. They spoke to those at table on business or the news of the day, and our host spoke freely to them." "He was sitting at meat" -- Literally, he was reclining. An alabaster cruse of ointment was used by the sinful woman who had repented of her sins. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 37-38:

"The city" is nameless. Luke probably had Capernaum in mind. "A sinner" probably means "a prostitute." A private dinner in Palestine could take on the appearance of a public entertainment, and uninvited guests around the banquet table excited no comment (cf. 14:2; Mark 2:16). Jesus would have removed his sandals before entering the house, and when he reclined on a couch, his "feet" would be stretched out away from the table. Luke does not describe the woman as a penitent but no doubt we are expected to deduce remorse from her "weeping." (IB)

Verse 38:

[at his feet](#) -- She simply intended to anoint his feet with a fragrant myrrh, but as she leaned over, tears gushed forth, which she ingenuously wiped away with her long hair. Completely overcome, she repeatedly kissed his feet. (JBC)

"Standing behind at his feet" -- The guest removed his sandals before the meal and he reclined on the left side with the feet outward. She was standing beside his feet weeping. She was drawn irresistibly by gratitude to Jesus and is overcome with emotion before she can use the ointment; her tears take the place of the ointment. "Wiped them with the hair of her head", meaning to rub out or off, began to wipe off, an act of impulse evidently and of embarrassment. Among the Jews it was a shameful thing for a woman to let down her hair in public; but she makes this sacrifice. So Mary of Bethany wiped the feet of Jesus with her hair (John 12:3) with a similar sacrifice out of her great love for Jesus. This fact is relied on by some to prove that Mary of Bethany had been a woman of bad character, surely an utter failure to recognize Mary's motive and act. "Kissed"--to kiss repeatedly, accented by the tense of continued action here. The word in the NT occurs here, of the prodigal's father (John 15:20), of the kiss of Judas (Mark 14:45; Matthew 26:49), of the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:37). Kissing the feet was a common mark of deep reverence, especially to leading rabbis. "Anointed them with the ointment"--The anointing came after the burst of emotional excitement. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 39:

[a prophet](#) -- Some manuscripts read "the" prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18; Acts 3:22; John 1:21), but in any case there seems to be a reference to verse 16. (JBC)

"The Pharisee" had invited Jesus in the belief that he was "a prophet." He now interprets an apparent failure to discern the character of the woman who was a "sinner" as evidence to the contrary. (IB)

“This man” -- Contemptuous, this fellow. If he were a prophet, determined as unfulfilled. The Pharisee assumes that Jesus is not a prophet (or the prophet that he claims to be). It is put from the standpoint of the speaker or writer. It does not deal with the actual facts, but only with the statement about the facts. “Would have perceived” -- is a wrong translation, would now perceive or know (which he assumes that Jesus does not do). The statement is false and the conclusion is also. He is wrong in both. The conclusion, like the condition, deals with the present situation (as in the conclusion, a mere device for making it plain that it is not a condition of the first class). “Who and what manner of woman” -- She was notorious in person and character. (INT--Robinson)
Verse 40:

While Simon silently condemns Jesus for not divining the character of the woman, Jesus proves himself to be a prophet by reading the secret thoughts of Simon. (JBC)

The host is addressed as “Simon” for the first time. Presumably Luke means us to assume that Jesus’ knowledge of the Pharisee’s thoughts was supernatural. (IB)

“Answering” -- Jesus answers the thoughts and doubts of Simon and so shows that he knows all about the woman also. It has been noted that there is a tone of Socratic irony here. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 41:

The story bears similarity to rabbinical anecdotes. (JBC)

“A certain lender” -- a lender of money with interest. Here alone in the NT, although it was a common word. “Debtors” -- from debt, obligation, and to owe. Used only here and Acts 16:5 in the NT, although it was common in late Greek writers as meaning active and so unpaid.

Verses 41-43:

The original context of many of Jesus’ parables has been lost, and this may be true of the parable of the two debtors. It teaches that a debtor’s gratitude will be in proportion to the debt that the “creditor” has canceled. There is nothing in the story that precedes and follows it to suggest that the woman’s emotions as she anointed Jesus were those of gratitude for an earlier assurance of forgiveness. God’s forgiveness was the consequence of the woman’s love, not its occasion. “Five hundred denarii” would approximate \$100.00 in United States currency, but much more than that in terms of purchasing power. (IB)

Verse 42:

“Will love him most” -- This is the point of the parable; the attitude of two debtors toward the lender who forgave both of them. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 43:

I suppose -- We can still feel the insolent frigidity of the speaker. (JBC)

“I suppose”--Old Greek verb, originally to take up from under, to bear away as on high, to take up in speech (Luke 10:30), to take up in mind or to assume as here and in Acts 2:15. Here with an air of supercilious indifference. “The most” -- the more. Rightly. Correctly. Socrates was fond of this phrase. The end of the argument. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 44:

“Turning” “Seest thou” -- For the first time Jesus looks at the woman and he asks the Pharisee to look at her. She was behind Jesus. Jesus was an invited guest. The Pharisee had neglected some points of customary hospitality. In each contrast the first word is the point of defect in Simon: water (44), kiss (45), oil (46). (INT--Robinson)

Verses 44-46:

These phrases, almost in poetic rhythm, beautifully portray Oriental etiquette. (JBC)

Verses 44-47a:

These verses continue the narrative of verses 36-40. The host had failed to extend any special courtesies: “water” for a foot bath; a “kiss” of welcome; anointment of the “head” before a meal. He had treated Jesus as a casual guest--possibly as a social inferior. In contrast the woman had lavished evidences of her love upon him. The story reaches its climax in verse 47a: “Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much” (cf. I Peter 4:8: “Love covers a multitude of sins”). Love is the qualification for divine forgiveness. (IB)

Verse 46:

“with ointment” -- she used the costly ointment even for the feet of Jesus. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 47:

[hence, she has shown great love](#) -- Or, “for she has loved much.” This verse has been a classic text for showing that perfect charity has the power of forgiving sins. It has been commented that “the context renders this interpretation almost impossible; for Jesus goes on at once to add, ‘but he to whom less is forgiven, loves less’ with evident reference to the parable whereby He had shown Simon that greater mercy calls forth the greater love of gratitude. The sense demanded by the context is ‘she loves because she is forgiven,’ and not ‘she is forgiven because she loves.’ And this is in fact the special causal sense which gives the reason not why the fact is so, but whereby it is known to be so.” (JBC)

“are forgiven” -- see Luke 5:21, 23. “for she loved much” -- illustration of proof, not reason for forgiveness. Her sins had been already forgiven and remained forgiven. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. --This explanation proves that the meaning preceding is proof, not cause.

Verse 47b:

“But he who is forgiven little, loves little” is in harmony with the point of the parable, but at variance with that of the story, and Luke may have added it when he integrated these two apparently incongruous traditions. It is just possible that the clause is a later scribal gloss for it is missing from some manuscript texts, together with “for she loved much” of verse 47a. (IB)

Verse 48:

“Are forgiven” -- remain forgiven, Jesus means, in spite of the slur of the Pharisee. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 48-49:

A new subject that is unrelated to anything that has gone before in the story or the parable but has interesting similarities to the question under discussion in 5:20-21.

Jesus pronounces absolution on the woman, and this table companions take offense at such an arrogation to himself of God's prerogative. (IB)

Verse 49:

"Who even forgives sin" -- Once before the Pharisee considered Jesus guilty of blasphemy in claiming the power to forgive sins (Luke 5:21). Jesus read their inmost thoughts as he always does. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 50:

"Your faith has saved you; go in peace" is the same as the statement addressed in 8:48 (Mark 5:34) to the woman with a flow of blood, the meaning of the first verb in the latter instance is necessarily "made you well." Forgiveness in this appendix to the sotry is the consequence of "faith" instead of "love." (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

The precise date and place of the recorded event in this Galilean journey of Jesus are left undetermined. It could not have occurred in the quiet little town of Nain. It is not in agreement with the scene which had been enacted there. Yet it must have followed almost immediately upon it. This can be inferred from the embassy of the Baptist's disciples which would undoubtedly have followed on the raising of the young man of Nain. It would have been unlikely for this embassy to have come to Jesus in Nain. It probably reached him on His farther Missionary journey, to which there seems some reference in the passage in the Matthew's Gospel which succeeds the account of that embassy.

The impression left upon us by Matthew 11:20-30 (which follows an account of the Baptist's embassy) is that Jesus was on a journey, and it may be that these precious words of encouragement, and invitation, spoken to the burdened and wearily laboring, formed part, or perhaps the substance, of his preaching on that journey. The actual words recorded in Matthew 11:20-30 could scarcely have been spoken at the time we are investigating now. They belong to a later period of the same missionary journey, and they mark a more fully developed opposition and rejection of Jesus than in these early days.

Returning now to the discussion at hand, the words Jesus spoke on this part of his journey were "good tidings", and not only to those borne down by weight of conscious sinfulness or deep sorrow, who wearily toiled towards the light of far-off peace, or those dreamed of heights where some comprehensive view might be gained of life with its labors and pains. It was also "good news" to them who would have been eager to learn that "the yoke of the Kingdom" was a heavy burden, and that it made for them the will of God to be labor, weary and unaccomplishable. Whether or not spoken at that special time, we cannot fail to recognize their special suitableness to the "forgiven sinner" in the Pharisee's house, and their inward, even if not outward, connection with her history.

In the unfolding of his mission to man, Jesus progressively placed himself in antagonism to the Jewish religious thought of His time, from out of which had historically sprang. At the time of this event, the Jewish leaders' opposition to him was not yet fully developed. From the first, their antagonism was there in what he taught and did; and it appeared with increasing distinctness in proportion to what he taught. We find it in the whole spirit and bearing of what he did and said--in the house at Capernaum, in the synagogues, with the Gentile centurion, at the gate of Nain, and especially here, in the history of the much forgiven woman who had sinned a great deal. A Jewish Rabbi could

not have so acted and spoken; he would not even have understood Jesus. A Jewish Rabbi, however gentle and pitiful, would in word and deed have taken precisely the opposite direction from that of Jesus.

Few events in the Gospel-history have been so blunted and turned aside as this history, through verbal controversies and dogmatic wrangling. The history itself is but a fragment. We must try to learn from its structure where and how it was broken off. We understand the infinite delicacy that left her unnamed, the record of whose "much forgiveness" and great love had to be joined to that of her much sin. In contrast and without any reason from the assertion, her history has been associated with the name of Mary Magdalene. Another, and perhaps even more painful mistake, is the attempt of certain critics to identify this history with the much later anointing of Jesus at Bethany. Yet the two narratives have really nothing in common, except that in each case (1) there was a "Simon," which is one of the most common Jewish names; (2) there was a woman who anointed; (3) and Jesus spoke to those present and he acted in accordance with other passages in the Gospel history that is true to each of their respective histories. Such twofold anointing --the first at the beginning of his works of mercy; the second at the close of his ministry -- is as the two-fold purgation of the Temple at the beginning and close of his work. It is like the completing of the circle of his life.

The invitation of Simon the Pharisee to his table does not necessarily indicate that he had been impressed by the teaching of Jesus. Neither does the supposed application of his case of what he called the "parable" of the much and the little forgiven debtor imply that he had received from Jesus any spiritual benefit, great or small. If Jesus had taught in the "city," and irresistibly drawn the multitude to him, it would only be in accordance with the manners of the time that the leading Pharisee would have invited the distinguished Teacher to his table. It was as such that he undoubtedly treated Jesus. The question in Simon's mind was, whether He was more than just a "teacher" -- perhaps even the "prophet". That such a question arose within him indicates that within the breast of Simon there was a struggle in which strong Jewish prejudice was bearing down on the mighty impression of Jesus' presence. Jesus had openly claimed a position from that of Rabbi. His followers regarded him at least as a prophet. These thoughts were consuming the mind of Simon.

They were all "lying" (reclining) -- the Mishnah sometimes calls it "sitting down and leaning" -- around the table, the body resting on the couch, the feet turned away from the table in the direction of the wall, while the left elbow rested on the table. From the open courtyard, up the verandah step, perhaps through an antechamber, and by the open door, passed the figure of a woman into the festive reception-room and dining-hall. One might wonder how she obtained access. Had she mingled with the servants, or was access free to all? Perhaps she had even been known in the house and to its owner? It doesn't really matter whether she "had been" or "was up to that day" a sinner. We must bear in mind the greatness of Jewish prejudice against any conversation with woman, however lofty her character, in order to fully realize the absolute incongruity on the part of such a woman in seeking access to the Rabbi, Whom so many regarded as the God sent Prophet.

To this woman it was not incongruous because to her Jesus had been the Prophet sent from God. We have already mentioned that this story is a fragment; and here, also,

as in the invitation of Simon to Jesus, we have evidence of it. She had, no doubt, heard Jesus' words on that same day. What he had said would be, in substance, if not in actual words: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest... Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart ... You shall find rest in your souls." This was to her the Prophet sent from God with the good news that opened even to her the Kingdom of Heaven, and laid its yoke upon her, not bearing her down to hell, but easy to wear and light of burden. She knew that it was all as He said, in regard to the heavy load of her past; and, as she listened to those words, and looked upon that Presence, she learned to believe that it was all as He had promised to the heavily burdened. Then she had watched, and had followed Him from afar off to the Pharisee's house. Or, perhaps, if it be thought that she had not that day heard for herself, still, the sound of that message must have reached her, and awakened the echoes of her heart. It was still "come to me; learn of me; I will give you rest." Nothing else mattered to her in the hunger of her soul, except that she had just tasted of that Heavenly Bread.

The shadow of her form must have fallen on all who sat at the meal. None spoke. Nor did she heed anyone but Jesus. Like heaven's own music, as angel's songs had guided the wanderer home, it still sounded in her ears. There are times when we forget all else in one all-absorbing thought when men's opinions, even our own feelings of shame, are obliterated by that one Presence--when the "come to me, learn of me, I will give you rest" are the all in all to us. Then it is that Jesus has struck our hearts. She had come that day "to learn" and to "find rest." What did it matter to her who was there, or even what they thought? There was only One Whose Presence she dared not encounter--not from fear, but from knowledge of herself. It was He to Whom she had come. And so she "stood behind at His feet." She had brought with her a phial, or flask (which was commonly made of alabaster) filled with perfume. It is a coarse suggestion that this had originally been bought for a far different purpose. We know that perfumes were much sought after, and were in large use. Some, such as true balsam, were worth double their weight in silver; others, like the spikenard though not equally as costly, were also considered "precious." We have evidence that perfumed oils -- notably made out of roses, and of the iris plant -- were chiefly manufactured and used in Palestine. The mixture known in antiquity as foliatum was the main one in use. A flask with this perfume was worn by women around the neck, and it hung down below the breast. So common was its use as to be allowed even on the Sabbath. This "flask" was not always made of glass; it was also made of silver or gold, probably often also of alabaster which contained the foliatum and it was used both to sweeten the breath and perfume the body of the person. Hence, it seems at least not unlikely, that the flask which she brought was not other than that of foliatum, which was so common among Jewish women.

As she stood behind Him at His feet, reverently bending, a shower of tears fell on His Feet. As if surprised, or else afraid to awaken his attention, or defile Him by her tears, she quickly wiped them away with the long tresses of her hair that had fallen down and touched Him, as she bent over His feet. She had not come to wash them in such impure water, rather she had come to show her loving gratefulness and reverence that which she could offer from her poverty and her humility. Now that her faith had grown bold in His Presence, she is continuing to kiss those Feet which had brought to her "the good tidings of peace" and to anoint them out of the alabaster flask around her neck. Still

she did not speak, nor as yet did He. On her part, silence seemed the most fitting utterance, while on His part He suffered her advances also in silence as the best and most fitting answer to her.

The Pharisees thoughts were far other than hers or Jesus' thoughts. Yet they also remained unuttered. A more painful contrast than that of the Pharisee, in this scene, can scarcely be imagined. We do not insist that the designation "this man" given to Jesus in his unspoken thoughts, or the manner in which afterwards he replied to Jesus' question by a supercilious "I suppose," or "presume," necessarily imply contempt. But they certainly indicate the mood of his spirit. One thing, at least, seems now clear to this Pharisee: If "this man," this strange, wandering, popular idol, with his strange, novel ways and words, Whom in politeness he must call "Teacher," Rabbi, were a Prophet, He would have known who the woman was, and, if He had known who she was, then He would never have allowed such an approach. So do we, also, often argue as to what He would do, if He knew. But He does know; and it is just because he knows that He does what, from our lower standpoint, we cannot understand. Had he been a Rabbi, he would certainly have repelled such an approach. And if he had been merely a Prophet, he would have probably repelled such an approach. If a Rabbi, the repel would have been from ignorance of sin and forgiveness, if not from self-righteousness. If a Prophet, it would have been repelled from such homage as being more than man's due. But He was more than a prophet. He was the savior of all sinners. Therefore, she might quietly weep over his Feet, and then quickly wipe away the tears, and continue to kiss His feet and anoint them.

Yet the Prophet he also was, and in a far fuller sense than Simon could have imagined. For he had read Simon's unspoken thoughts. And presently he would show it to him -- not as we might expect by open reproof, that would have put him to shame before his guests -- but with infinite delicacy towards his host, and still in a manner that he could not mistake. What follows is not, as generally supposed, a parable, but rather it is an illustration. Accordingly, it must not be pressed too far. With this explanation vanish all the supposed difficulties about the Pharisees being "little forgiven," and therefore, "loving little." To convince Simon of the error of his conclusion, that, if the life of that woman had been known, the prophet must have forbidden her touch of love, Jesus entered into the Pharisee's own mode of reasoning. Of two debtors, one of whom owed ten times as much as the other, who would best love the creditor who had freely forgiven both debts. Although to both the debt might have been equally impossible to discharge, and both might love equally, yet a Rabbi would, according to his Jewish notions say that he would love most to whom most had been forgiven. If this was the undoubted outcome of Jewish theology -- the so much for so much -- let it be applied to the present case. If there were much benefit, there would be much love; if little benefit, little love. And conversely, in such case much love would argue much benefit; little love, little benefit. Let him then apply the reasoning by marking this woman, and contrasting her conduct with his own.

To wash the feet of a guest, to give him the kiss of welcome, and especially to anoint him, were not necessary attentions at a feast. All the more did they indicate special care, affection, and respect. None of these tokens of deep regard had marked the merely polite reception of Jesus by the Pharisee. In a twofold climax of which the intensity can

only be indicated, Jesus now proceeds to show, how different it had been with her to whom, for the first time, He now turned. On Simon's own reasoning he must have received but little benefit, while she received much benefit. Or, to apply the former illustration, and now to reality: "Forgiven have been her many sins"-- not in ignorance, but with knowledge of their being "many." This, by Simon's former admission, would explain and account for her much love, as the effect of much forgiveness. On the other hand, although in delicacy Jesus does not actually express it -- this other inference would also hold true, that Simon's little love showed that "little is being forgiven."

What has been explained will dispose of another controversy which has been connected with this history. It must not be made a question between Roman Catholic and Protestant, nor between rival dogmatists, whether love had any meritorious part in her forgiveness, or whether, afterward stated, her "faith" had saved her. Undoubtedly, her faith had saved her. What she had heard from His lips, what she knew of Him, she believed. She believed in "the good tidings of peace" which she had brought, in the love of God, and His Fatherhood of pity to the most sunken and needy; in Christ, as the Messenger of Reconciliation and Peace with God; in the Kingdom of Heaven which He had so suddenly and unexpectedly opened to her, from out of which Heaven's voices had come to her. She believed it all: the Father, the Son as Revealer, and the Holy Spirit as Revealing. When she came to that feast, and stood behind with humbled, loving gratefulness and reverence of heart-service, she was already saved. She need not to be forgiven; she had already been forgiven. And it was because she was forgiven that she wept at His feet with the summer-shower of her heart, and quickly wiping away the flood with her tresses, continued kissing and anointing them. All this was the impulse of her heart, who having come in heart, still came to him, and learned of him, and found rest for her soul.

This was the final gift of Jesus to her. As formerly for the first time he had turned so now for the first time he spoke to her -- and once more with the tenderest of delicacy -- "Thy sins have been forgiven -- not are forgiven, and not now -- "the many." Nor does he now heed the murmuring thoughts of those around him, who cannot understand who this is that forgives sins also. But to her, and truly, though not literally, to them also, and to us, he said in explanation and application of it all: "Thy faith has saved thee: go into peace." Our logical dogmatics would have had it: "go in peace; more truly, he said "Go into peace." And so she, the first who had come to him for spiritual healing, the first of an unnumbered host, went out into the better light, into peace of heart, peace of faith, peace of rest, and into the eternal peace of the Kingdom of Heaven, and of the Heaven of the Kingdom hereafter and forever.

Session 15

Overview from LToJC:

However interesting and important it is to follow Jesus on his journey through Galilee, and to group in their order the notices of it in the Gospels, the task seems almost hopeless. Since one of the Evangelists attempted to write a biography of Jesus, any strictly historical arrangement lay outside their purposes. Their point of view was that of the internal, rather than the external development of this history. Events that were kindred in purpose, discourses bearing on the same subject, or parables pointing to the same stretch of truth were grouped together; or, as in the present instance, the unfolding teaching of Jesus and the growing opposition of His enemies exhibited by joining together notices which, perhaps, belong to different historical periods. The lesson to us is that just as the OT gives neither the national history of the Kingdom of God in its progressive development, so the Gospels do not present “a life of Jesus,” but rather the history of the Kingdom of God in its progressive manifestation. Although there are difficulties connected with details, we can trace in outline the general succession of events.

* * * * *

g. GALILEAN WOMEN FOLLOW JESUS

Luke 8:1-3

1. Read Luke 8:1-3 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference
2. Read Luke 8:1
(1) Luke 4:43
3. Read Luke 8:2-3
(1) Matthew 27:55-56 (4) Luke 24:10
(2) Mark 15:40-41 (5) John 19:5
(3) Luke 23:49

Luke 8:1-3

- 1 Afterward he journeyed from one town and village to another, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. Accompanying him were the Twelve
- 2 and some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,
- 3 Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their resources.

Overview from JBC:

This section, found only in Luke, manifests the Evangelist's hand in several ways: (1) Lucan words or phrases; (2) particular attention bestowed upon women; and (3)

exclusive source of information, especially about Herod Antipas. Jesus imparts a new dignity and role to woman in granting her a right not only to learn the “good new of the Kingdom of God,” but even to participate in the ministry (cf. I Corinthians 9:5). Some of the rabbis doubted woman’s ability even to learn the Torah. In the Gospels women bring the first news of the resurrection to the apostles (24:1, 10f.; Acts 1:14).

Verse 1:

journeyed -- Jesus has already appeared as a wanderer, seeking out men for the kingdom (4:43-44; 5:12) and as a guest (see 7:36ff.), distributing forgiveness and salvation. (JBC)

This first part of this verse is editorial. (IB)

“Soon afterwards” -- In Luke 7:11 we have a word meaning “one after the other,” “successively.” Luke provides no definite data as to the time, only that this incident follows that of 7:36-50. Both of these events are found in only Luke. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 1b-3:

In addition to the “twelve” Jesus was accompanied by “certain women” whom he had restored to health of mind and body. Luke was interested in the women who had been associated with Jesus’ ministry and the life of the early church. Mark 15:40-41 also refers to women--not mentioned by name in Luke 23:49, 55--who had followed Jesus in Galilee had ministered to him. “Mary, called Magdalene” is common to both lists. There is no good reason to identify her with the “sinner” of 7:37-50. Magdala, also known as Tarichaea, was a fishing village on the western bulge of the Galilean lake. “From whom seven demons had gone out”; that is, the woman had been cured of a particularly serious mental disorder. “Joanna” is also mentioned with Mary Magdalene in 24:10. As the “wife” of one of “Herod’s” officials she was presumably a woman of affluence and social standing; but there is no reference elsewhere in Jewish or Christian literature to “Chuza” or to his office as “steward.” Nothing is known of “Susanna” (“lily). “For them” has much better attestation in the manuscripts than “unto him”. Jesus and his disciples did not depend on chance hospitality but were supported by women of means. (IB)

Verse 2:

Mary Magdalene -- That is, from Magdala (=modern Mejdal), a city at the halfway mark along the western coast of the Sea of Galilee, never mentioned in the Bible. There is no reason to identify Mary Magdalene with the sinful woman of 7:36ff. Luke introduces Mary as someone new. (JBC)

seven demons -- Or, “seven devils.” Such possession can indicate only a very serious illness. (JBC)

“Which had been healed” -- suggests that the healing had taken place some time before this tour. These women all had personal grounds of gratitude to Jesus. “From whom seven devils (demons) had gone out -- This first mention of Mary Magdalene describes her special cause of gratitude. This fact is also stated in Mark 16:9 in the disputed close of the Gospel. The presence of seven demons in one person indicates special harm (Mark 5:9). See Matthew 12:45 for the parable of the demon who came back with seven other demons worse than the first. It is not known where Magdala was, or from where Mary came. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 3:

[Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza](#) -- Or, "Joanna, wife of Chuza."

Possibly a source of information about Herod Antipas for Luke. If Chuza were the royal official of John 4:46-53, then we could understand why he would allow his wife to minister to Jesus. (JBC)

"Joanna" -- her husband Chuza, steward of Herod Antipas, is held by some to be the nobleman in John 4:46-53 who believed, as well as all those from his house. At any rate Jesus had a follower from the household of Herod Antipas who had such curiosity to see and hear him. One may recall also Manaean (Acts 13:1), Herod's foster brother. Joanna is mentioned again with Mary Magdalene in Luke 24:10. "Who ministered unto them"--the fact that Jesus now had twelve men going with him called for help from others and the women of means responded to the demand. "of their substance" -- This is the first women's missionary society for the support of missionaries of the Gospel. They had difficulties in their way, but they overcame these, so great was their gratitude and zeal. (INT--Robinson)

[many others](#) -- Cf. Mark 15:41. (JBC)

Summary from LToJC:

Jesus was now returning to Capernaum from that Missionary journey of which Nain had been the southernmost point. On this journey he was attended, not only by the Twelve, but by loving grateful women, who ministered to Him of their substance. Among them three are specifically named: "Mary, called Magdalene," had received from him special benefit of healing to body and soul. Her designation as Magdalene was probably derived from her native city, Magdala, just as several Rabbis are spoken of in the Talmud as "Magdalene."

"Magdala, which was a one-day journey from Tiberius, was celebrated for its dye works, and its manufacture of fine wooden textures. All of that district seems to have been engaged in this sort of work. It also had a reputation for its traffic in turtle-doves and pigeons for purifications -- Jewish tradition, with its usual exaggeration of numbers, mentions three hundred such shops. Accordingly, its wealth was very great, and it is named among the three cities whose contributions were so large as to be sent in a wagon to Jerusalem. But its moral corruption was also great, and to this the Rabbis attributed its final destruction.

Magdala had a synagogue. Its name was probably derived from a strong tower which defended its approaches, or served for an outlook. This suggestion is supported by the circumstance that what seems to have formed the suburb of Magdala bore the names of "Fish-tower" and "Tower of the Dyers". If not both, then at least one of these towers would be near the landing-place by the Sea of Galilee and it would have overlooked its waters. The necessity for such places of outlook and defense would be increased by the proximity of the magnificent plain of Gennesaret, of which Josephus speaks in such rapturous terms (*Jewish Wars*. 3. 10). Moreover, only twenty minutes to the north of Magdala descended the "Valley of Doves" through which passed the ancient caravan-road that led over Nazareth to Damascus. The name "valley of doves" illustrates the substantial accuracy of the Rabbinic descriptions of ancient Magdala. Modern travelers have noticed the strange designation "Valley of Doves" without being able to suggest the explanation of it, which the knowledge of its traffic in doves for purposes of purification at once supplies.

Of the many towns and villages that dotted the shores of the Sea of Galilee all have passed away except Magdala, which is still represented by the collection of mud shacks that bear the name of Mejdal. The ancient watch-tower which gave the place its name is still there, probably standing on the same site as that which looked down on Jesus and the Magdalene. To this day Magdala is celebrated for its springs and rivulets, which render it especially suitable for dye works; while the shell-fish with which these waters and the lake are said to abound, might supply some of the dye.

Such details may help us more clearly to realize the home, and with it, perhaps also the upbringing and circumstances of her who not only ministered to Jesus in His life, but with eager avarice of love watched from afar off his dying moments, and then sat over against the new tomb of Joseph in which His body was laid. Yet however difficult the circumstances may have been, in which Mary the Magdalene came to profess her faith in Jesus, those of Joanna must have been even more trying. She was the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward--possibly, although not likely, the court-official whose son Jesus had healed by the word spoken in Cana. The absence of any reference to the event seems rather opposed to this supposition. It even seems doubtful whether Chuza was a Jewish name. In Jewish writings the designation seems rather used as a by-name ("little pitcher") for a small, insignificant person than as a proper name. Only one other of those who ministered to Jesus is mentioned by name. It is Susanna, the "lily." The names of the other loving women are not written on the page of earth's history. They "ministered to him of their substance."

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h. HEALING OF TWO BLIND MEN

Matthew 9:27-31

4. Read Matthew 9:27-31 entirely through one time.
(1) Matthew 20:29-34
5. Read Matthew 9:27
(1) Matthew 15:22
6. Read Matthew 9:28-31
(1) No references

Matthew 9:27-31

- 27 And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed (him), crying out, "Son of David, have pity on us!"
- 28 When he entered the house, the blind men approached him and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I can do this?" "Yes, Lord," they said to him.
- 29 Then he touched their eyes and said, "Let it be done for you according to your faith."
- 30 And their eyes were opened. Jesus warned them sternly, "See that no one knows about this."

31 But they went out and spread word of him through all that land.

Overview from JBC:

This episode is a doublet of the healing of two blind men at Jericho. See 20:29-34.

Verse 27:

Son of David -- This title occurs in both accounts; this was a popular Messianic title, for the king Messiah was a descendant of David and a new David. This version of the incident is expanded by an explicit demand for faith. (JBC)

The “blind men” appeal to him as Son of David, as in 20:30 (=Mark 10:47). This is one of the regular titles of the Messiah (for example, Songs of Solomon 17:23[21]), and Jesus is so addressed because of the belief that the Messiah could work miracles (John 7:31). (IB)

“As Jesus passed by” -- It was the supreme opportunity of these two blind men. Note two demoniacs in Matthew 8:28 and two blind men in Matthew 20:30. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 28:

As in 15:23, Jesus gives no answer at first. Then he insists that they must believe in his power; this emphasizes the teaching of verses 18 and 22. (IB)

Verse 29:

“touched their eyes” -- The men had faith (Matthew 9:28) and Jesus rewards their faith, yet he touched their eyes as he sometimes did with kindly sympathy. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 30:

“strictly charged them” -- The word used here describes rather a rush of deep feeling which in the synoptic passages showed itself in a vehement injunctive, but in John 11: 33 it is shown in look and manner. Mark 1:32 is translated: “Looked severely, contracting his eyebrows, and shaking his head at them as they are wont to do who wish who make sure that secrets will be kept.”-- “see to it, let no one know.” (INT--Robinson)

Verses 30-31:

In these verses we have an allusion to “the Messianic Secret,” which is rare in Matthew. The reason for the duplication of the incident here is no doubt the threefold classification of the miracles. (JBC)

“See that no one knows it” is a stern command drawn from Mark 1:43-44. Mark believed that Jesus wished to keep secret not only the healings and the truth about his messiah-ship, but also the significance of his parables. Such an extreme theory cannot be correct; but it is possible that Jesus did not wish to be known as a miracle worker. The kind of “fame” would attract many curious people who cared nothing about his message. (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

It was on their return journey to Capernaum, probably not far from the latter place, that the two blind men had their sight restored. It was also then that the healing of the demonized dumb took place, which is recorded in Matthew 9:32-35, and alluded to in Mark 3:22-30. This narrative event must, of course, not be confused with the somewhat similar event told in Matthew 12:22-32 and in Luke 11:14-26. The latter occurred at a

much later period in Jesus' life, when (as the whole context shows) the opposition of the Pharisaic party had assumed much larger proportions, and the language of Jesus was more fully denunciatory of the character and guilt of his enemies. That charge of the Pharisees, therefore, that Jesus cast out the demons through the Prince of the demons, as well as His reply to it will best be considered when it shall appear at its fullest development. We believe, at least the greater part of Jesus' answer to their blasphemous accusation, as given in Mark's Gospel, to have been spoken at that later period.

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i. THE HEALING OF A MUTE PERSON

Mathew 9:32-34

7. Read Matthew 9:32-34 entirely through one time.
 (1) Matthew 12:22-24 (2) Luke 11:14-15
8. Read Matthew 9:32
 (1) No reference
9. Read Matthew 9:33
 (1) Mark 2:12 (2) Mark 7:37
10. Read Matthew 9:34
 (1) Matthew 10:25 (2) Mark 3:22

Matthew 9:32-34

- 32 As they were going out, a demoniac who could not speak was brought to him,
- 33 and when the demon was driven out the mute person spoke. The crowds were amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel."
- 34 But the Pharisees said, "He drives out demons by the prince of demons."

Overview from JBC:

In spite of some variations in detail, this passage appears to be an abbreviated doublet of 12:22-24.

Overview from IB:

This incident seems to be drawn from Q. It corresponds to Luke 11:14 more closely than does the doublet in Matthew 12:22. There are also contrasts with the story of the deaf an with a speech impediment in Mark 7:32-37. Blindness, deafness, and dumbness due to psychological causes (usually hysteria) are well known to medicine.

Verse 32:

The word translated "dumb" can also mean "deaf" as in 11:5 = Luke 7:22; Mark 7:32. The corresponding Hebrew word is used in rabbinical writings to refer to deaf-mutes. Here the context gives this sense. (IB)

"A dumb man" -- literally, blunted in tongue as here and so dumb, in ear as in Matthew 11:5, and so deaf. Others have applied it as a mental dullness. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 34:

[the prince of demons](#) -- The charge of the Pharisees that Jesus was in league with Beelzebul is the occasion of a long controversy in 12:25-37. The reason for the duplication is the same as that given in the preceding passage. (JBC)

This verse is omitted by Bezae (D), two OL manuscripts and the Sinaitic Syriac. It has probably been added to the text from Luke 11:15. Here it is out of place, since it introduces the controversy over the casting out of demons, which is not dealt with fully until chapter 12. (IB)

“By the prince of devils”-- Demons, not devils. The codex Bezae omits this verse, but it is probably genuine. The Pharisees are becoming desperate and, unable to deny the reality of the miracles, they seek to discredit them by trying to connect Jesus with the devil himself, the prince of the demons. They will renew this charge later (Matthew 12:24) when Jesus will refute it with biting sarcasm. (INT--Robinson)

Summary from LToJC:

It was on this return journey to Capernaum from the uttermost borders of Galilee, when for the first time He was not only followed by his twelve apostles, but attended by the loving service of those owed their all to His ministry, that the demonized dumb was restored by the casting out of the demon. Even these circumstances show that a new stage in the Messianic course had begun. It is characterized by a fuller unfolding of Jesus' teaching and working, and by more fully developed opposition of the Pharisaic party. For the two went together, or can they be distinguished as cause or effect. That new state had opened on His return from that “Unknown Feast” in Jerusalem, from which he seems to have been followed by the Pharisaic party. We have marked it as early as the call of the four disciples by the Sea of Galilee. But it first actively appeared at the healing of the paralytic in Capernaum when, for the first time, we noticed the presence and murmuring of the Scribes, and also for the first time the distinct declaration about the forgiveness of sins on the part of Jesus. The same twofold element appeared in the call of the publican Matthew-Levi, and the quibbling (nit-picking) of the Pharisees at Jesus' subsequent eating and drinking with “sinners.” It was in further development of this separation from the old and now hostile element, that the twelve Apostles were next appointed, and that distinctive teaching of Jesus addressed to the people in the “Sermon on the Mount” which was both a vindication and an appeal. On the journey through Galilee, which now followed, the hostile party does not seem to have actually attended Jesus; but their growing, and now outspoken, opposition is heard in the discourse of Christ about John the Baptist after the dismissal of his disciples, while its influence appears in the unspoken thoughts of Simon the Pharisee.

It has already been suggested that the Pharisaic party, as such, did not attend Jesus on His Galilean journey. But we are emphatically told, that tidings of the raising of the dead at Nain had gone forth into Judea (Luke 7:17). No doubt they reached the leaders at Jerusalem. There seems just sufficient time between this and the healing of the demonized dumb on the return-journey to Capernaum, to account for the presence there of those Pharisees who are expressly described by Mark (3:22) as the “Scribes who came down from Jerusalem.”

Whatever view the leaders at Jerusalem may have taken at the raising at Nain, it could no longer be denied that miracles were performed by Jesus. At least, what to us

seem miracles, yet it was not so with the Jewish leaders. The “miraculous” cures and the expelling of demons lay within the sphere of their “extraordinary ordinary” -- they did not consider them as miracles in our sense since they were, or professed to be, done by their “own children.” The mere fact, therefore, of such cures, would present no difficulty to them. To us a single well-ascertained miracle would form undeniable evidence of the claims of Jesus; to them it would not. They could believe in the “miracles”, but not in the Christ. To them the question would not be, as it would be for us, whether they were miracles--rather it would be, by what power, or in what Name, he did these deeds? From our standpoint, their opposition to Jesus would -- in view of His miracles -- seem not only wicked, but rationally unexplainable. But ours was not their point of view. Here, again, we perceive that it was enmity to the Person and Teaching of Jesus which led to the denial of His claims.

The inquiry of by what power Jesus did these works? was met by the assertion that it was through that of Satan, or the chief of the demons. They regarded Jesus as not only temporarily, but permanently, possessed by a demon, that is, as the constant vehicle of Satanic influence. And this demon was, according to them, none other than Beelzebul, the prince of the devils. Therefore, in their view, it was really Satan who acted in and through Him; and Jesus, instead of being recognized as the Son of God, was regarded as an incarnation of Satan; instead of being owned as the Messiah, was denounced and treated as the representative of the Kingdom of Darkness. All this, because the Kingdom which He came to open, and which He preached, was precisely the opposite of what they regarded as the Kingdom of God. It was the essential opposition of Rabbinism to the Gospel of Christ that lay at the foundation of their conduct towards the Person of Jesus. We venture to assert that this accounts for the whole after-history up to the Cross.

Viewed in this way, the history of Pharisaic opposition appears not only consistent, but is, so to speak, morally accounted for. Their guilt lay in treating that as Satanic agency which of the Holy Spirit; and this, because they were of their father the Devil, and knew not, nor even understood, nor yet loved the Light, their deeds being evil. They were not children of the light, but of that darkness which comprehended Him not Who was Light. And now we can also understand the growth of active opposition to Jesus. Once arrived at this conclusion, that the miracles which Jesus did were due to the power of Satan, and that He was the representative of the Evil One, their course was rationally and morally chosen. To regard every fresh manifestation of Jesus’ power as only a fuller development of the power of Satan, and to oppose it with increasing determination and hostility, even to the Cross; such was henceforth the natural progress of this history. On the other hand, such a course once fully settled upon, there would, and could, be no further reasoning with, or against it on the part of Jesus. Henceforth His discourses and attitude to such Judaism must be chiefly denunciatory, while still seeking--as, from the inward necessity of his Nature and the outward necessity of his mission, He must lay broad and wide the foundations of the future Church. But the old hostile Judaism must, in the future, be left to the judgment of condemnation, except in those tears of Divine pity which the Jew-King and Jew-Messiah wept over Jerusalem that knew not the day of its visitation.

This was the beginning movement which would eventually reach its full proportions. For the present, we mark only its first appearance. The charge of Satanic

agency was not quite new. It has been suggested that John the Baptist had been under demonical influence, and this cunning pretext for resistance to his message had been eminently successful with the people. The same charge, only in much fuller form, was now raised against Jesus. As “the multitude marveled saying, it was never so seen in Israel”, the Pharisees, without denying the facts, had this explanation of them, to be presently developed to all its terrible consequences; that, both as regarded the casting out of the demon from the dumb man and all similar works, Jesus performed them “through the ruler of the demons.”

The edge of this manifestation of Jesus was blunted and broken. Their opposition of Jesus did not cease; it only grew. It is to this that we attribute the visit of “the mother and brethren” of Jesus, which is recorded in all three Synoptic Gospels.

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j. PROTESTS AGAINST JESUS

(1) BLASPHEMY AND THE SCRIBES

Mark 3:20-22

11. Read Mark 3:20-22 entirely through one time.

(1) No reference

12. Read Mark 3:20

(1) Mark 2:2

13. Read Mark 3:21

(1) John 10:20

14. Read Mark 3:22

(1) No reference

Mark 3:20-22

20 He came home. Again (the) crowd gathered, making it impossible for them even to eat.

21 When his relatives heard of this they set out to seize him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

22 The scribes who had come from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "By the prince of demons he drives out demons."

Overview of verses 20-21 from IB:

These two verses are probably Mark's introduction to the controversy that follows; verse 20 is vividly Marcan, while verse 21 shows how the opposition to Jesus had begun to affect those nearest him. The word “those with him” may mean “his family,” although it is doubtful if Mark meant to anticipate verse 31 in this way. “His

friends” is probably the best translation. “Beside himself” describes a stage of dangerous mental exaltation (II Corinthians 5:13), characteristic of certain religious enthusiasts, exorcists, and miracle-workers.

The controversy proper, very different in tone and outlook from those that precede it, is found in verses 22-26. To this have been added, either by Mark, or already in the Q collection of Jesus’ sayings, the two sayings that follow in verse 27 and in verses 28-29. Their relevance at this point is undeniable. In Q the controversy was introduced by an actual exorcism (Matthew 12:22; Luke 11:14). Mark’s introduction has obliterated this, with the resulting contrast between humane concern of Jesus’ friends and the bitter charge of the Jerusalem scribes. In the original passage from Q (see Matthew 12:23) the words of the scribes are intended to neutralize the effect of Jesus’ exorcism upon the enthusiastic populace.

Verse 20:

making it impossible for them even to eat -- Or, “could not even eat.” Literally means “eat bread,” which would mean to take food of any kind (see Genesis 31:21). (JBC)

The crowd was so great, both indoors with Jesus and the disciples and also outdoors, that they could not rest, could not even eat, and apparently Jesus could not even teach. The crowd had reassembled immediately upon Jesus’ return home. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 21:

his relatives -- Or, “his people.” Literally, “those around him”, which could mean “friends, relatives, household” (Proverbs 31:21). Verse 31 specifies them as Jesus’ kinsfolk. (JBC)

"He is out of his mind." -- Or, “he is insane.” This is the equivalent of an accusation of demonic possession (cf. John 7:20; 8:48). (JBC)

“his friends” could also mean another circle of disciples who had just arrived and who knew of the crowds and strain of the Galilean ministry. They arrived at this special juncture. But the idiom most likely means the kinspeople or family of Jesus, as is common in the LXX. It is a mournful spectacle to think of the mother and brothers saying: “he is beside himself.” We say the same thing in the words “He is out of his head.” Certainly Mary did not believe that Jesus was in the power of Beelzebul as the rabbis had already said. The scribes from Jerusalem are trying to discount the power and prestige of Jesus (II Corinthians 3:22). Mary probably felt that Jesus was overly burdened and wished to take him home, and away from the excitement and strain so that he could get some rest and the proper nourishment of his bodily needs. The brothers did not as yet believe the pretensions and claims of Jesus (John 7:5). Herod Antipas will later consider Jesus as John the Baptist redivivus, the scribes treat him as under demonic possession, even the family and friends fear a disordered mind as a result of the overstrain. It was a crucial moment for Jesus. His family or friends had come to take him home, to lay hold of him, forcibly if need be. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 22:

possessed -- Although 3:31-35 may originally have followed 3:21, Mark here recounts the accusation made by religious leaders. The combination of the two accusations suggests that the personal animosity of Jesus’ kin was of a piece with the

opposition that eventually led to Jesus' death. (JBC)

by **Beelzebub** -- The Vulgate reads "Beelzebub" ("lord of flies") which in the MT of II Kings 1:2, 3, 6, 16 is the execratory name for the Philistine god of Ekron. This name was corrupted into "lord of the dwelling", or "Baal the prince". The Greek NT has preserved the more original name. But it is not elsewhere attested in pre-Christian literature as the name of a demon. (JBC)

"Beelzebub," better "Beelzebul". This was originally a divine title and meant "Lord of the Mansion" (Is the "mansion," the earth? the air? The world? Notice the play on the word in Matthew 10:25b). In time this primitive baal degenerated into a powerful demon, like other pagan gods surviving in Jewish folklore. Here he is "the prince of the devils"; that is, "ruler of the demons", and is therefore identified with Satan (verse 23). The charge, therefore, meant that Jesus was by means exercising the power of God, or power conferred by God, or by the Holy Spirit (verse 29; cf. Matthew 12:28), but was himself "possessed by Beelzebul", and performed his exorcisms through collusion with this archfiend. The theory was plausible enough for ancient popular thought. Like Faust, a worker of miracles might be in league with the devil. A powerful demon could "cast out" another and less powerful one; while the whole dark realm of the evil one was sometimes thought of as an organized kingdom or household (verses 24-25), much as in C.S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters*. The half-hidden innuendo was that sooner or later the wonder worker (here, Jesus) would pay the price of his power, and be carried off by the demons with whom he was allied. (IB)

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(2) JESUS AND BEELZEBUB

Mark 3:23-30
Matthew 12:22-32
Luke 11:14-23

15. Read Mark 3:23-30 entirely through one time.
(1) Matthew 12:24-32 (3) Luke 12:10
(2) Luke 11:15-22
16. Read Mark 3:23-27
(1) No reference
17. Read Mark 3:28
(1) Luke 12:10
18. Read Mark 3:29-30
(1) No reference

Mark 3:23-30

- 23 Summoning them, he began to speak to them in parables, "How can Satan drive out Satan?

- 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.
25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.
26 And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand; that is the end of him.
27 But no one can enter a strong man's house to plunder his property unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can plunder his house.
28 Amen, I say to you, all sins and all blasphemies that people utter will be forgiven them.
29 But whoever blasphemes against the holy Spirit will never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an everlasting sin."
30 For they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

Overview of verses 23-26 from IB:

Jesus' reply is a clear logical refutation of this absurd theory. Satan could hardly be at war with himself. The telling conclusion (verse 26) at least suggests that the assumption of civil discord in Satan's realm, even if true, would argue only the end of Satan's power. Jesus' whole message of the coming kingdom of God implies--and involves--the end of Satan's reign. It is curious that Mark describes Jesus' defense as "in parables"; this shows the looseness and vagueness of the term as Mark understands it; any analogy was a "parable." Here, Satan's kingdom is like any realm "divided against itself" by civil war, and so on its way to destruction. Very striking is the fact that Jesus does not trouble to defend himself or his work; his concern is the purpose underlying all his exorcisms, the total destruction of the power of the enemy. And that power is obviously, and even upon the testimony of his opponents, already dissolving before their eyes. Why Mark omitted the other arguments in the Q passage (Matthew 12:27, 28, 30 and parallels in Luke) we do not know. As a rule he gives comparatively little of Jesus' teaching; and the other sayings on this occasion may have seemed to him adequately represented in the one he retains in verse 27.

Verse 23:

[How can Satan drive out Satan?](#) -- Or, "How can Satan cast out Satan?" Jesus argues that his exorcisms do indeed signal the collapse of Satan's rule, but some power other than that of Beelzebul is needed to explain Jesus' works, since Satan is not so foolish as to destroy his own rule. (JBC)

"in parables" -- In crisp pungent thrusts that exposed the inconsistencies of the scribes and Pharisees. (Parable--placing beside another for reasons of comparison.) These short quips concern Satan's casting out Satan. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 27:

[unless he first ties up the strong man](#) -- Or, "unless he first bind the strong man." Namely, Beelzebul. Jesus is the "stronger man" (1:14) who has broken into Satan's house and can now proceed to plunder his enemy's household. (JBC)

The binding of "the strong man" (Satan) is a figure for the work of exorcism (often described as "binding" the demon), and for the downfall of the realm of evil--as in Revelation 20:2. "His goods" means the demons, subordinate to Satan their chief, not just as the bodies of men which they occupy or "possess." Mark's point is that Jesus is stronger than "the strong man," the Son of God who has come "to destroy the works of

the devil.” But in the original saying of Jesus the point was that the robber’s stronghold has been invaded and his “goods” are being ravaged; therefore, it must be evident, “the strong man” has already been bound. But this can scarcely be a reference, as some have argued, to the temptation experience, about which the scribes cannot have known. (IB)

“spoil” -- plunder, thoroughly ransack. This is a picture of Satan plundering the demons, the very tools by which he carries out his business. Jesus reduces the argument into the absurd. Jesus is the conqueror of Satan, not in league with him. (INT--Robinson)

Verses 28-30:

This final section is found in another connection in Luke 12:10, as is also the following section in Matthew 12:33-37. Presumably, then, the Q material underlying Mark ends with verse 27. If verses 28-29 are from Q, they were not located here. But it looks as if the parallels in Matthew 12:32 and Luke 12:10 represent a more advanced development than Mark: instead of “sins...forgiven...the sons of men, and blasphemies”, we read of “a word spoken against the Son of man,” which is presumably a later and more specific application of the principle. The structure of the saying here is somewhat difficult to make out, but the sense is clear: every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit; this cannot be forgiven, because, some theologians say, the blasphemer is incapable of repentance. The one who so blasphemes, attributing the work of God’s Spirit to Satan, or to human self-interest, “is guilty of an eternal sin” (not, “in danger of eternal damnation” as it appears in some versions); verse 30 then explains the relevance of the saying. The passage is one that has given endless speculation regarding “the unforgivable sin,” speculation sometimes reflected in the text (for example, many manuscripts omit “forever” in verse 29), sometimes in the translation, as in “in danger of eternal damnation”. It is safe to say, theologically, that certainly very few persons have ever been guilty of this “unforgivable sin.” Few have ever said with Milton’s Satan, “Evil, be thou good.” At the same time, the danger of it is constant--the attribution of divine works of mercy and restoration to human personal ambition, to mercenary or political aims, to lust for power, or to collusion with the powers of darkness. To Mark the accusation brought against Jesus by the scribes no doubt implied their guilt, as it also implied that of others who repeated the slander. To say that Mark understood it to involve the whole Jewish people is going beyond the evidence. It may be suspected that the saying, in its present form, has been modified--that is, sharpened--in tradition; it may indeed be a controversial elaboration of the Q saying in Matthew 12:28 and Luke 11:20, which Mark omits. Clearly Mark is at pains, in verse 30, to connect the saying with the preceding controversy, though “an unclean spirit” is somewhat weak as a reference to Beelzebul, the powerful ruler of the demons. Both parallels omit the verse, and it has been thought to be a later gloss. (IB)

Verse 28:

[all sins and all blasphemies that people utter will be forgiven](#) -- Or, “all sins will be forgiven”. Jesus affirms both the universality of God’s pardon for all sins and the impossibility of pardon for a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. (JBC)

Verse 29:

[whoever blasphemes against the holy Spirit](#) -- This seems to contradict verse 28. The unforgivable sin is that which ascribes Jesus’ works to the power of one other than

God's Holy Spirit manifest in Jesus' victory over the demons. (JBC)

"guilty of an eternal sin" -- In saying that Jesus had an unclean spirit they had attributed to the devil the work of the Holy Spirit. This is the unpardonable sin and it can be committed today by men who call the work of Christ the work of the devil. Nietzsche may be cited as an instance in point. Those who hope for a second probation hereafter may ponder carefully how a soul that eternally sins in such an environment can ever repent. That is eternal punishment. The text here is sin, not judgment. (INT--Robinson)

* * * * *

19. Read Matthew 12:22-32 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference
20. Read Matthew 12:22-24
(1) Matthew 9:32-34 (2) Luke 11:14-15
21. Read Matthew 12:24
(1) Matthew 10:25 (2) Mark 3:22
22. Read Matthew 12:25-29
(1) Mark 3:23-27 (2) Luke 11:17-22
23. Read Matthew 12:25-27
(1) No reference
23. Read Matthew 12:28
(1) Luke 11:20
24. Read Matthew 12:29
(1) No reference
25. Read Matthew 12:30
(1) Luke 11:23
26. Read Matthew 12:31-32
(1) Mark 3:28-30 (2) Luke 12:10

Matthew 12:22-32

- 22 Then they brought to him a demoniac who was blind and mute. He cured the mute person so that he could speak and see.
- 23 All the crowd was astounded, and said, "Could this perhaps be the Son of David?"
- 24 But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "This man drives out demons only by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons."
- 25 But he knew what they were thinking and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste, and no town or house divided against itself will stand.

- 26 And if Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself; how, then, will his kingdom stand?
- 27 And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own people drive them out? Therefore they will be your judges.
- 28 But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.
- 29 How can anyone enter a strong man's house and steal his property, unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house.
- 30 Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.
- 31 Therefore, I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.
- 32 And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

Overview from IB:

The evangelist uses Mark 3:22-29 in making up this section, but he omits Mark 3:20-21, perhaps because it might appear that his associates or family thought Jesus mad. He relies particularly, however, on Q material, which is also preserved in Luke 11:14-23; 12:10. The little story (verses 22-23) may originally have stood alone, as in 9:32-33, where it is found in almost identical form, but in Q, it was used as a setting for the controversy over the casting out of demons.

Overview of verses 22-24 from JBC:

The accusation of the Pharisees is the occasion of one of the major controversial statements of Jesus. The accusation is found in Mark 3:20-22 without the miracle story; both Matthew and Luke 11:14-16 have the miracle story from Q; and it seems that the accusation also followed the miracle story in Q. The miracle is described in only the bare essentials; the interest is not in the miracle but in the discussion that follows.

Verse 22:

a **demoniac who was blind and mute** -- Or "a blind and dumb demoniac". Matthew adds "blind" to the "dumb" of Luke. The description illustrates the current popular demonology. Where Luke has a question expressing wonder, Matthew has a question whether Jesus is not the Son of David, a Messianic title. Matthew specifies the accusers as Pharisees; Mark has "the scribes," Luke "some." We have noticed that Matthew anticipates this incident in 9:32-34. (JBC)

Matthew, by saying that this demoniac is also "blind," indicates that this is not the same story as 9:32-33. The phraseology is similar to 9:27-31; Luke 11:14. (IB)

Verse 23:

The Messiah, or "Son of David" would have power to work miracles. (IB)

Verse 24:

Beelzebul -- The name comes from II Kings 1:2-6. The NT has preserved the correct reading of the name; the MT has corrupted it (a not infrequent occurrence when divine names occur in the MT) to "Baalzebub". The name means "Baal the prince" and is not attested elsewhere in Jewish literature as the name of a demon. The accusation

reduces Jesus to the level of a common magician; it was understood that such feats could be performed with the assistance of demons. (JBC)

The true reading, found in practically all Greek manuscripts, is “Beelzebul.” This is the Aramaic form of the word which in the first century may have been understood as “lord of the high house” or “of the temple.” It is a very ancient divine name. The Ras Shamra texts (about 1400 B.C.) describe the Canaanite god Aleyan Baal as “Zebul, baal of the earth,” and here “-zebul” means “exalted one”. The god of Ekron mentioned in II Kings 1:2 must have been called “Baalzebul,” but the Biblical writers call him “Baalzebul” for the Vulgate NT, from which it has come into the English versions. The Jews, as this passage shows, regarded Beelzebul as “the prince of the demons” and not a god. The charge that Jesus practiced magic is found in the Talmud and also in Justin.

(IB)

Overview of verses 25-32 from JBC:

A comparison of the three Synoptists shows that this episode was found both in Mark 3:23-30 and in Q (Luke 11:17-23; 12:10 parallels). This indicates the importance this discussion had in the early church. Furthermore, it is probable that the composition of the passage reflects the controversies of the primitive Church with the Jews. Verses 25-26 are an abbreviation of Mark 3:23-26, but verses 27-28 agree with Luke 11:18a-20 with no parallel in Mark. Verse 30 agrees with Luke 11:23, again with no parallel in Mark. Verses 31-32 conflate Mark 3:28-29 and a Q passage that appears in a briefer form in Luke 12:10.

Verse 25:

Every kingdom divided against itself -- Or, “A kingdom divided against itself”. The first argument in response is based on the absurdity of the charge of the Pharisees. If Jesus expels demons by Beelzebul, then the kingdom of Satan is doomed by its own internecine strife. This consequence the Pharisees are unwilling to admit. Implicit, no doubt, is the principle that the collapse of the reign of Satan will not occur until the advent of the reign of God. (JBC)

Verses 25-26:

It would be natural to use Beelzebul as a name for “Satan,” although this is not done in Jewish literature. Mark uses both names, but the Q section which mentions Satan perhaps belonged originally to a separate but similar tradition. Verse 27 could easily follow verse 24, while verses 26 and 29 naturally belong together. Satan’s kingdom or sovereignty is opposed to that of God and consists of the human beings whom he is able to capture. If he, or one of his demons, casts out demons, his “house” is “divided against itself” and civil war will bring it to an end. A philosopher might argue that evil cannot remain united and must at last defeat itself. But Jesus does not consider this possibility. He certainly does not suppose that it is unnecessary to fight Satan, or does he underestimate Satan’s power to do damage. (IB)

Verse 27:

The second argument, missing in Mark, is drawn from exorcisms worked by the Jews. (JBC)

your own people -- Or, “your sons,” which is a Semitism for “yourselves,” members of our own group.” The genuineness of the exorcisms worked by Jews is not called in question; it is neither affirmed nor denied. There is a subtlety in this argument

that eludes the modern reader; our ignorance of the ritual of Jewish exorcisms makes the force of the argument somewhat difficult to see. The exorcisms of Jesus in the Gospels are accomplished by a simple command, sometimes accompanied by a touch. It is highly probable that Jewish exorcists used long and complicated rituals, with perhaps more than a touch of magical formulas. (JBC)

they will be your judges -- Jesus challenges the Pharisees to compare the displays of power. Jewish exorcists themselves will be the judges; they can attest the implications of a successful exorcism performed by a simple command. (JBC)

“Your sons” are probably exorcists who belong to the Pharisees. The rabbis believed that evil spirits had gained control when men served other gods, but there were always some righteous men like Solomon who could exorcise the demons and control them (Tobit 6:7, 16-17; 8:2-3; Josephus *Antiquities*. 8. 2. 5). If the Pharisee’s works are valid, certainly those of Jesus are! To condemn him is to condemn all who are liberating the oppressed. (IB)

Verse 28:

Spirit of God -- Or, “God’s Spirit”. The power of Jesus shows that the spirit of God is at work; Luke 11:20 has the more picturesque “finger” of God (see Exodus 8:15). Luke’s phrase is probably more original; Matthew’s change to “spirit” leads into the saying about blasphemy, which Luke has in a different context (12:10). (JBC)

the kingdom of God has come upon you -- Or, “the reign of God has overtaken you,” which literally means “has come upon you,” that is, when they were not looking. Such a display of power of the Spirit clearly shows that the Messianic age is dawning. This Messianic claim is more explicit than Mark’s customary style. (JBC)

But if neither Jesus nor the other exorcists have their power from Beelzebul, they act “by the Spirit of God.” And this is a sign that in some sense the “kingdom of God” has already “come,” for the power of demons will be broken in the messianic age. According to an ancient text, it is the messianic high priest who will do this great deed. Thus the decisive act of history has occurred, and it is only a question of time until the kingdom will be fully manifest. Jesus and the others work toward the same end; but Jesus’ healings are so numerous and striking that it is evident that God has intervened actively. (IB)

Verse 29:

The parable of the strong man shows that Jesus is completely master of the demons. Satan is a robber lord whose “goods,” which mean here those who are bound by demonic possession, are kept in his castle. No one can release them unless he has mastered the strong one and his fortress. (JBC)

A saying on the same theme, but with a different metaphor, which all three evangelists introduce here. It connects well with verse 26, “how then... or how...?” The “one” who enters into the “house” may be God, acting through Jesus; the “strong man” is Satan, and his “goods” the humans whom he has captured. The point is: “Satan will not cast out Satan; it is necessary for someone else to bind him”--a “stronger one,” as Luke 11:22 says. Is the “house” a reference to Beelzebul as “lord of the house”? (IB)

Verse 30:

Here Q added a saying that is not found in Mark and does not seem to belong to this context. A similar idea is expressed in Mark 9:40; Luke 9:50. The saying affirms

that Jesus demands a decision that cannot be evaded. Neutrality toward him is impossible; to be neutral is to reject him. (JBC)

An apparently contradictory saying is found in Mark 9:40, where Jesus remarks that one who also casts out demons is not likely to be an enemy of Jesus. Here: "One who will not help in this all-important work of rescue 'is against me.' He who will not help me to 'gather' God's people into his kingdom from the four corners of the earth actually 'scatters' the flock." The metaphor of gathering is found in Didache 9:4 and in Jewish prayers. (IB)

Verse 31:

blasphemy against the Spirit -- The saying about blasphemy against the Spirit has long presented difficulty, particularly in Catholic theology, which affirms the possibility of repentance up to the moment of death. This teaching is solidly founded in the NT, and this saying of Jesus cannot be understood in a way that contradicts his invitations to repentance. Refusal to recognize the Son of Man as Messiah can be forgiven; faith atones for previous denial of faith. This Messianic claim is missing in Mark. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, however, attributes the activity of the Spirit to some other power. The present activity of God can be attested only through the actions of the Spirit. If these are not recognized, then there is no means by which God can reach man. The one who will not accept the work of the Spirit has made it impossible for himself to recognize the word and the work of God. Only he can be forgiven who confesses that he has something to be forgiven. (JBC)

Verses 31-32:

This "hard saying" also occurred in Q (Luke 12:10). The Mishnah says that those who deny the resurrection, those who deny that the law is from God will have no share in the world to come. It has been remarked that in Mark 3:28-30 the words are a warning against presumption and not a limitation of God's grace. Perhaps the thought is: "To ascribe the Spirit's work to Satan is to overturn all moral values. He who takes such an attitude shuts himself out from forgiveness by his very stubbornness and impenitence. Words of misunderstanding" (cf. 11:6). The extreme statement, "either in this age or in the age to come," is not found in Luke 12:10, and may have been added to the tradition. (IB)

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27. Read Luke 11:14-23 entirely through one time.
(1) Matthew 12:22-30 (2) Mark 3:20-27
28. Read Luke 11:14
(1) No reference
29. Read Luke 11:15
(1) Matthew 9:34
30. Read Luke 11:16
(1) Matthew 12:38 (3) Mark 8:11
(2) Matthew 16:1 (4) I Corinthians 1:22

31. Read Luke 11:17-19
(1) No reference

32. Read Luke 11:20
(1) Exodus 8:19

33. Read Luke 11:21-22
(1) No reference

34. Read Luke 11:23
(1) Luke 9:50 (2) Mark 9:40

Luke 11:14-23

- 14 He was driving out a demon (that was) mute, and when the demon had gone out, the mute person spoke and the crowds were amazed.
- 15 Some of them said, "By the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he drives out demons."
- 16 Others, to test him, asked him for a sign from heaven.
- 17 But he knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste and house will fall against house.
- 18 And if Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that it is by Beelzebul that I drive out demons.
- 19 If I, then, drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own people drive them out? Therefore they will be your judges.
- 20 But if it is by the finger of God that (I) drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.
- 21 When a strong man fully armed guards his palace, his possessions are safe.
- 22 But when one stronger than he attacks and overcomes him, he takes away the armor on which he relied and distributes the spoils.
- 23 Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

Overview from JBC:

These verses are found, with variations, in Matthew 12:22-27; dependence on Mark 3:20-30 is much more difficult to decide.

Overview from IB:

Mark also contains the charge that Jesus' power of exorcism was due to collusion with Beelzebub (Mark 3:22-30). Matthew makes Mark's story basic to his account, amplifying it with Q materials. Luke omits the Marcan narrative at the point at which he would normally have included it (after 6:16), and now makes a place for the Q version.

Verse 14:

a demon (that was) mute -- Or, "a demon that was dumb." Miracles are an attack upon Satan (4:33-37, 40-41); sickness is viewed as the effect of a diabolical hold upon the human race. (JBC)

the crowds were amazed -- Or, "the crowds marveled." This expression is typical in Luke. (JBC)

The occasion of the slur; an exorcism performed by Jesus. (IB)

Verse 15:

Critics do not challenge the reality of the miracle. (JBC)

Beelzebul -- Cf. II Kings 1:2. Ba'al-zebul ("Lord of the divine abode" or "Baal the Prince") was chief god of the Philistine city of Ekron; the Israelites mockingly changed the name to Ba'al-zebub ("Lord of Flies"). (JBC)

The charge that a man was in league with the forces of evil was an exceedingly dangerous one in a superstitious age. In Mark it was made by "scribes" and in Matthew "by the Pharisees." Luke's indefinite "some of them" probably represents the reading in Q. The name that was given to "the prince of demons"--that is, to Satan (verse 18)-- has been variously preserved. "Beelzebul" is derived from the Hebrew text of II Kings 1:2-3 where Beelzebub ("lord of the flies") is a contemptuous perversion of "Baalzebul" ("lord of the temple"), the name of the god of Ekron. But "Beelzebul" in Aramaic was open to the derogatory interpretation "lord of dung". None of the forms has been found in Jewish literature as a name for Satan. (IB)

Verse 16:

Jesus has just worked a sign for the poor and needy; his opponents wanted a different kind of sign, one of national splendor or military victory. (JBC)

The equivalent in Matthew (12:38) is more appropriately located as an introduction to the material parallel to verses 29-32. If Luke's order is secondary, the transposition was deliberate. The evangelist believes that Jesus' healing miracles, properly understood (verse 20), are in themselves an answer to the demand for "a sign from heaven." (IB)

Verse 17:

In Mark's and Matthew's versions "house" means "household," and Jesus makes two parallel statements. The KJV interprets Luke's text in a similar way but the RSV translates the Greek text as it stands: "house falls upon house." Luke understands "house" literally and the clause illustrates the content of the verb "laid waste." (IB)

Verse 18:

This is Luke's explanation. (JBC)

The charge is absurd. "Satan" would not undermine his own "kingdom" by giving Jesus authority over demonic powers. (IB)

Verses 19-20:

Almost identical in Matthew and Luke. Jewish exorcisms are described by Josephus, *Antiquities*. 8:2. 5. (JBC)

Verse 19:

The charge could as easily be brought against "your sons;" that is, Jewish exorcists (cf. Acts 19:13; Josephus *Antiquities*. 8. 2. 5)--and they should be asked to answer it. Because this verse has no counterpart in Mark, and because it partially invalidates the interpretation of his healing ministry that Jesus gives in verse 20--he would hardly have adduced Jewish exorcisms as evidence that the "kingdom of God has come"!-- some scholars believe it did not belong to the earliest form of the tradition. (IB)

Verse 20:

finger of God -- The phrase spoken by the magicians of Egypt admitting their inability to duplicate the miracles of Moses and Aaron (Exodus 8:15-19). Jesus' adversaries have less faith than these foreigners. (JBC)

"The finger of God" is an OT expression (Exodus 8:19; Deuteronomy 9:10), and perhaps preferable to Matthew's "the Spirit of God". Jesus declares that his power over "demons" comes from "God" and that it is evidence that the new age of God's rule has already begun (cf. 10:18). According to Jesus' teaching, the full manifestation of the "kingdom of God" belongs to the future. It will be introduced suddenly and catastrophically as the climax of the "last days." But in some measure it is already in being. Jesus himself is the vehicle of divine power already at work among men: "the Kingdom of God has come upon you." (IB)

Verses 21-22:

In Mark and in Matthew the "strong man" of this parable is a householder, and the situation contemplated is one of violent robbery. In Luke "the strong man" is a prince whose "palace" is captured by armed assault. In both forms the one point is that Satan is now impotent. Allegory not only identifies Jesus with the "one stronger than he", but also Satan's human victims with "his goods" and "his spoils" and the demons with "his armor." (IB)

Verses 21-23:

Cf. the incident of David and Goliath (I Samuel 17). The binding of Satan is an eschatological concept (Isaiah 24:22; Tobit 8:3; Revelation 20:2f.). (JBC)

Verse 23:

The first clause is in apparent conflict with 9:50b, but not for that reason alone is to be regarded as secondary. Jesus declares that the kingdom of God is set over against the kingdom of Satan, and that there is no place for neutrals in the conflict. The metaphors of 23b refer to the work of a herdsman rather than a harvester. (IB)

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j. JESUS AND HIS FAMILY

Matthew 12:46-50

Mark 3:31-35

Luke 8:19-21

11. Read Matthew 12:46-50 entirely through one time.

(1) Mark 3:31-35

(2) Luke 8:19-21

Matthew 12:46-50

- 46 While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers appeared outside, wishing to speak with him.
- 47 (Someone told him, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, asking to speak with you.")
- 48 But he said in reply to the one who told him, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?"
- 49 And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother

and my brothers.
50 For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Overview from JBC:

In Mark 3:31-35 this passage is probably a resumption of Mark 3:20-21, a passage so difficult that both Matthew and Luke omit it. "His own" (so we render Mark 3:21) are here specified as mother and brethren.

Overview from IB:

The story is told simply to point the moral of verse 50. (Similar teaching is found in Luke 11:27-28). It is not meant to imply that Jesus paid no attention to family ties. His earthly family, however, played a very small role in the traditions preserved in Mark and Q, and the infancy stories represent a special interest in the Messiah's early life which is not noticeable in the gospel tradition generally.

Verses 46-50:

See Mark 3:31-35. Matthew has omitted Mark 3:20-21 which is taken up in Mark 3:31, yet the point of the story is the same in both gospels: natural kinship with Jesus counts for nothing; only one who does the will of his heavenly Father belongs to his true family. (NAB)

Verse 46:

brothers -- This word must be taken as kinsmen, unless one insists that Mary had children who are never mentioned in the NT or in any other source of early tradition. The kinsmen, very probably from Nazareth, seem to have felt that Jesus was acting imprudently. Most commentators have failed to regard the kinsmen as being kind; the allusions in the Gospels to the hostility of the Pharisees are to be taken seriously, and it is more likely that the kinsmen were motivated by a desire to take Jesus out of a situation of growing danger than by envy or fear for his sanity. (JBC)

"his mother and his brothers" -- brothers of Jesus, younger sons of Joseph and Mary. The charge of the Pharisees that Jesus was in league with Satan was not believed by the disciples of Jesus, but some of his friends did think that he was beside himself (Mark 3:21) because of the excitement and strain. It was natural for Mary to want to take him home for rest and refreshment. So the mother and brothers are pictured standing outside the house (or the crowd). They send a messenger to Jesus. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 47:

This verse is not attested in the most important manuscripts and is largely a repetition of 12:46. (JBC)

This verse is redundant and was interpolated from Mark 3:32 into the "Western text." It is found in Bezae (D) and some OL manuscripts. It is properly omitted in some of our versions. (IB)

This verse is omitted in some important textual witnesses, including Codex Sinaiticus (original reading) and Codex Vaticanus. (NAB)

This verse has been omitted in some manuscripts. It is genuine in Mark 3:32; Luke 8:20. It was probably copied into Matthew from Mark or Luke. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 48:

Matthew has here abbreviated so sharply that he becomes obscure. The response

of Jesus seems harsh, but it is not harsher than his words in 8:22 and 10:37, which are here illustrated by his conduct. The new unity Jesus forms about himself is a unity in which other bonds, even the bonds of kinship, are sublimated. Jesus does not reject the bonds of kinship, but raises all who believe in him to an intimacy of kinship. His own kin exclude themselves from this new unity if they do not believe in him. Again in fairness to the kinsmen, the saying does not imply that they do not believe in Jesus. (JBC)

The Synoptics do not attempt to present Jesus' mother as an important personage omitting to mention even her presence at the Crucifixion; that tradition is found in John 19:25-27. John pictures the mother as faithful but not completely understanding her son (John 2:4-5). Acts 1:14 associates her with the disciples after the Crucifixion. If Jesus was Mary's first-born son (1:25), the "brothers" were younger than Jesus. This is the most natural way to understand the gospel story. Many Christians of the third and fourth centuries chose to believe in the perpetual virginity of Mary and therefore assumed either (1) that the brothers were sons of Joseph by a former marriage--the theory of Epiphanius and others, or (2) that they were cousins, the sons of another Mary (27:56)--the theory of Jerome. Such theories are derived from pure speculation, and the gospel record gives no support to them. According to John, the "brothers" did not believe in Jesus (John 7:5), but we know from other sources that they were active in the affairs of the early church (I Corinthians 9:5). (IB)

Verse 49:

Matthew regards the "disciples," perhaps the twelve, as Jesus' true family; in Mark 3:34 it is all those who are seated here with him. (IB)

"Behold my mother and my brothers" -- A dramatic wave of the hand towards his disciples (learners) accompanied these words. Jesus loved his mother and brothers, but they were not to interfere in his Messianic work. The real spiritual family of Jesus included all who follow him. But it was hard for Mary to go back to Nazareth and leave Jesus with the excited crowd so great that he was not even stopping to eat (Mark 3:20). (INT--Robinson)

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12. Read Mark 3:31-35 entirely through one time.

(1) Matthew 12:46-50

(2) Luke 8:19-21

Mark 3:31-35

31 His mother and his brothers arrived. Standing outside they sent word to him and called him.

32 A crowd seated around him told him, "Your mother and your brothers (and your sisters) are outside asking for you."

33 But he said to them in reply, "Who are my mother and (my) brothers?"

34 And looking around at those seated in the circle he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers.

35 (For) whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

Overview from JBC:

The episode opens with the recording of a reaction toward Jesus on the part of those who knew him well.

Overview from IB:

Many modern commentators and homilists have identified the “brothers” and “mother” of Jesus with the friends of verse 21, and have thus supplied a specific motivation for their visit; they came to rescue Jesus from the consequences of his popularity and success, as well as from the hands of his enemies. This is possible, but not certain.

The point of the anecdote for Mark is clearly the pronouncement in verse 35: Jesus set obedient response to “will of God,” presumably as proclaimed in his teaching, far above all earthly relationships, even the most intimate and precious (cf. 10:29-30). What this meant for the early church, including for Mark’s readers, can easily be imagined. In place of broken relationships, ostracism, and persecution, was the close and intimate relation to the Son of God, who had himself preferred one for patristic commentators to expound; and it must have been hard for any Jew to receive, for whom the command “Honor thy father and thy mother” was part of the Decalogue. But for that very reason its originality and authenticity, as a saying of Jesus, seem beyond question.

Verse 31:

[his brothers](#) -- See comments on Galatians 1:19 and Matthew 12:46. (JBC)

“The brother of James ... Simon” -- in Semitic usage, the terms “brother,” “sister” are applied not only to children of the same parents, but to nephews, nieces, cousins, half-brothers, and half-sisters. Cf. Genesis 14:16; 29:15; Leviticus 10:4. While one cannot suppose that the meaning of a Greek word should be sought in the first place from Semitic usage, the Septuagint often translates the Hebrew *ah* by the Greek word *adelphos*, “brother,” as in the cited passages, a fact that may argue for a similar breadth of meaning in some NT passages. For instance, there is no doubt that in verse 17, “brother” is used of Philip, who was actually the half-brother of Herod Antipas. On the other hand, Mark may have understood the terms literally; see also Mark 3:31-32; Matthew 12:46; 13:55-56; Luke 8:19; John 7:3, 5. The question of meaning here would not have arisen but for the faith of the church in Mary’s perpetual virginity. (NAB)

“Standing without” -- This is a pathetic picture of the mother and brothers standing outside of the house thinking that Jesus inside is beside himself and wanting to take him home. They were crowded out. They sent to him, calling him. They were unwilling to disclose their errand to take him home, and so get the crowd to pass word unto Jesus on the inside, “calling him” through the others. Some of the manuscripts add “sisters” to mother and brothers as seeking Jesus. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 32:

“Was sitting about him” -- They sat in a circle around Jesus with the disciples forming a sort of inner circle. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 33:

[Who are my mother and \(my\) brothers?](#) -- The pronouncement, for the sake of which the episode was recalled, is full of disappointment. It is not inconsistent with a tender care for kinsmen. (JBC)

Verse 34:

[looking around at those seated in the circle](#) -- Or, “looking around at them.” See

3:5. (JBC)

“looking round on them” -- This is another of Mark’s life-like touches. Jesus calls those who do the will of God his mother, brothers, and sisters. This does not prove that the sisters were actually there. The brothers were hostile and that gives point to the tragic words of Jesus. One’s heart goes out to Mary who has to go back home without ever seeing her wondrous Son. What did it all mean to her at this hour? (INT--Robinson)

Verse 35:

whoever does the will of God -- Jesus does not deny his natural kinship but radically subordinates it to a higher bond of brotherhood. The reign of God makes demands on the personal commitment of a disciple, which must transcend at all times all natural bonds of family or ethnic grouping. However one interprets this passage about the “brothers” of Jesus, it is to be noted that the doctrine of Mary’s perpetual virginity is not based on Marcan texts. (JBC)

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14. Read Luke 8:19-21 entirely through one time

(1) Matthew 12:46-50

(2) Mark 3:31-35

Luke 8:19-21

19 Then his mother and his brothers came to him but were unable to join him because of the crowd.

20 He was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside and they wish to see you."

21 He said to them in reply, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it."

Overview from JBC:

See Mark 3:31-35; Matthew 12:46-50. In place of the Marcan conclusion to the parable of the sower, Luke uses a story that Mark and Matthew place in the context of a controversy. Luke omits that very difficult section of Mark 3:20-21, which provides a reason why Jesus’ relatives visit him. The sharp separation between Jesus and his natural kin is thus modified. By the final sentence of this episode (Mark has “whoever does the will of God”) Luke deliberately links it with the preceding parable of the sower who sows the seed of the Word of God (verse 11). Read against the background of the Infancy Narrative, where Mary ponders the Word (1:29; 2:19, 51), these verses might point to Mary as the supreme example of the receptive hearer. Yet because Mary, his brethren, and Herod Antipas all desire “to see” Jesus (cf. Luke 9:9), one scholar concludes that the reason is the same in each case: to see a wondrous “epiphany” or miracle. And Jesus proceeds to reject them on this condition (cf. Luke 4:23). We must remember, however, the vastly different character of each in Luke. (JBC)

Overview from IB:

See 11:27-28 and Mark 10:29-30 for similar sayings elsewhere in the gospel tradition (cf. Hebrews 2:11). Bonds of the spirit bind the family of God, not those of blood. According to Mark’s account, Jesus’ family had been disturbed by the rumor that he was a lunatic--possessed by Beelzebul--and had come to interrupt his ministry. All

this has disappeared from Luke's version, which is abbreviated and transposed to a new setting. By reading "those who hear the word of God and do it" instead of "whoever does the will of God" the evangelist has related the saying to that in verse 15 and has made it an effective conclusion to the discourse. There is no reason to suppose that the "brothers" here are not brothers in the usual sense of the word.

Verse 19:

"his mother and brethren" -- Mark 3:31-35; Matthew 12:46-50 place the visit of the mother and brothers of Jesus before the parable of the sower. Usually Luke follows Mark's order, but he does not do so here. At first the brothers of Jesus (younger sons of Joseph and Mary, one may take the words to mean, there being sisters also) were not unfriendly to the work of Jesus as seen in John 2:12 when they with the mother of Jesus are with him and the small group (probably half-a-dozen) of disciples in Capernaum after the wedding in Cana. But as Jesus went on with his work and was rejected at Nazareth (Luke 4:16-31), there developed an evident disbelief in his claims on the part of the brothers who ridiculed him six months before the end (John 7:5). At this stage they have apparently come with Mary to take Jesus home out of the excitement of the crowds, perhaps thinking that he is beside himself (Mark 3:21). They hardly believed the charge of the rabbis that Jesus was in league with Beelzebul. Certainly the mother of Jesus could give no credence to that slander. But she herself was deeply concerned and wanted to help him if possible. (INT--Robinson)

Verse 21:

The family of Jesus is not constituted by physical relationship with him but by obedience to the word of God. In this, Luke agrees with the Marcan parallel (Mark 3:31-35), although by omitting Mark 3:33 and especially Mark 3:20-21 Luke has softened the Marcan picture of Jesus' natural family. Probably he did this because Mary has already been presented in Luke 1:38 as the obedient handmaid of the Lord who fulfills the requirement for belonging to the eschatological family of Jesus; cf. also Luke 11:27-28. (NAB)

"that which hear the word of God and do it" -- The absence of the article with "mother" and "brothers" probably means, as has been argued: "Mother to me and brothers to me are those who" No one is a child of God because of human parentage (John 1:13). Family ties are at best temporal; spiritual ties are eternal. Notice the use of "hear and do" together here as in Matthew 7:24; Luke 6:47 at the close of the Sermon on the Mount. The parable of the sower is almost like a footnote to that sermon. Later Jesus will make "doing" a test of friendship for him (John 15:14). (INT--Robinson)

Summary from LToJC:

As previously mentioned, It is to the opposition of the Pharisees and their claim that Jesus performed miracles by the power of Satan that we attribute the visit of the mother and brothers of Jesus, which is recorded in the three Synoptic Gospels. This circumstance shows its decisive importance. It forms a parallel to the former attempts of the Pharisees to influence the disciples of Jesus, and then to stir up the hostility of the disciples of John, both of which are recorded by the three evangelists. It also brought to light another distinctive characteristic of the mission of Jesus. We place this visit of the mother and brothers of Jesus immediately after his return to Capernaum, and we attribute it to Pharisaic opposition, which either filled those relatives of Jesus with fear for his

safety, or made them sincerely concerned about his proceedings. Only if it meant some kind of interference with his mission, whether prompted by fear or affection, would Jesus have disowned their relationship. It meant more than this, however.

We remember the deep reverence among the Jews for their parents, which found even exaggerated expressions in the Talmud. Of all in Israel, He who was their King, could not have spoken, nor done, what might seem even more disrespectful to a mother. There must have been higher meaning in his words. The meaning would be better understood after His resurrection. It was needful before that time though in order to point to the higher and stronger spiritual relationship, while in the presence of interference or hindrance by earthly relationships, even those nearest and tenderest, and perhaps even more in their case. For had he not entered into earthly kinship solely for the sake of the higher spiritual relationship which he was about to found; and was it not, then, in the most literal sense, that not those in nearest earthly relationship, but they who sat "about him"--those who do the will of God-- were really in closest kinship with him? Thus, it was not that Jesus set lightly by his mother, but that he confounded not the means with the end, nor did he surrender the spirit for the letter of the Law of love, when refusing to be arrested or turned aside from his mission, not even for a moment. He elected to do the will of His Father rather than neglect it by attending to the wishes of his mother. He places not the mother, but the Father first. This is the right relationship in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Session 16

From LToJC:

Jesus and his disciples are once more by the Sea of Galilee. The scene depicted in the parables spoken by Jesus at this time by the Sea of Galilee indicated an advanced season when the fields gave their first promise of a harvest to be gathered in due time. It is known that the barley-harvest commenced with the Passover, therefore we can hardly be mistaken in supposing that the scene is laid a few weeks before Passover.

From the opening verses we infer that Jesus had gone forth from “the house” with his disciples and as He sat by the seaside, the gathering multitude had compelled him to enter a ship from where he spoke to them of many things in parables. This first of three series of parables (spoken by the Sea of Galilee) bears no distinct reference to the Pharisees’ accusation. However, it did appear shortly after the Pharisaic opposition had devised the explanation that His works were of demoniac agency. This first series concerns possible misled affections which would have converted the ties of earthly relationship into bonds to hold Christ. To this there was only one reply, when Jesus stretched out his hand over those who had learned, by following him, to do the will of his heavenly Father, and so become his nearest kin. This was the real answer to the attempt of his mother and brethren; it was also the real answer to the Pharisaic charge of Satanic agency. It was in this connection that, first to the multitude, then to his disciples, the first series of parables were spoken. They exhibit the elementary truths concerning the planting of the Kingdom of God, its development, reality, value, and final vindication. This marked the first of three stages in the developing enmity of the Pharisees.

The internal connection between the parables and the history of Christ best explains their meaning. Their artificial grouping (as which almost all modern critics are concerned) is too ingenuous to be true. One thing, however, is common to all the parables, and it forms a point of connection between them. They all occur after some particular unreceptiveness on the part of his hearers, and that, even when the hearers are professing disciples. This seems indicated in the reason given by Jesus to his disciples for His use of parabolic teaching--that unto them it was “given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God, but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables.” This leads us to some general remarks on the parables which are necessary for understanding them.

There was perhaps no other mode of teaching that was so common among the Jews as that of parables. Only in their case, they were almost entirely illustrations of what had been said or taught; while in the case of Jesus, they served as the foundation for His teaching. In the case of the Jews, the light of earth was cast heavenward; in the case of Jesus, that of heaven was cast earthward. In the case of the Jews, it was intended to make spiritual teaching appear Jewish and national; in the case of Jesus, it was to convey spiritual teaching in a form that was adapted to the standpoint of his hearers. The difference between them will appear not merely as one of degree, but rather of standpoint. This may be illustrated by the parable of the woman who made anxious search for the lost coin to which there is an almost literal Jewish parallel. In the Jewish parable the moral is that a man should take much greater pains in the study of the Torah than in the search for the coin, since the former secures an eternal reward, while the coin would, if found, at

most secure only an temporary enjoyment. Yet in Jesus' parable it is intended to set forth, not the merit of study, or of works, but rather the compassion of the Savior in seeking the lost, and the joy of Heaven in his recovery of that which was lost. It need scarcely be said that the comparison between such parables, as regards their spirit, is scarcely possible, except by way of contrast.

Jewish writers give highest praise to the use of parables, as placing the meaning of the Law within range of the comprehension of all men. The "wise king" (Solomon?) had introduced this method, the usefulness of which is illustrated by the parable of a great palace which had many doors, so that people lost their way in it until someone came along and fastened a ball of thread at its chief entrance so that all could readily find their way in and out. Even this will illustrate what has been said of the difference between Rabbinic parables and those of Jesus.

All parables bear reference to well-known scenes, such as those of daily life; or to events, either real or such as every one would expect in the given circumstances; or they would be in accord with the prevailing notions of the time. Such pictures, familiar to the popular mind, are in the parable connected with corresponding spiritual realities. Yet there is that which distinguishes the parable from the mere illustration. The illustration conveys no more than that which was to be illustrated, while the parable conveys this and a great deal beyond it to those who can follow up its shadows to the light by which they have been cast. In truth, parables are the outlined shadows--large, and perhaps even a little dim--as the light of heavenly things falls on well-known scenes which correspond to, and have their higher counterpart in spiritual realities. For earth and heaven are twin parts of Jesus' works.

Another characteristic of parables is that in them the whole picture or narrative used in illustration of some heavenly teaching, and not merely one feature or phase of it. In the parabolic illustrations, only one part is selected as parabolic. Yet even in the shortest parables, the picture is complete, and has not only one feature but in its whole bearing a counterpart in spiritual realities.

In the symbolic parable a scene from nature or from life serves as the basis for exhibiting the corresponding spiritual reality. In the typical parable the illustration lies on the outside so to speak, whereas in the symbolic parable the illustration is found within the narrative or the scene. The symbolic parable is to be applied whereas the typical parable must be explained.

It is here that the characteristic difference between the various classes of hearers lay. All the parables implied some background of opposition, or else of unreceptiveness. In the record of this first series, the fact that Jesus spoke to the people in parables, and "only in parables," is strongly marked. It appears, therefore, to have been the first time that this mode of popular teaching was adopted by Jesus. Accordingly, the disciples not only expressed their astonishment, but inquired about the reason of using this novel method. The answer of Jesus makes a distinction between those to whom it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom, and those to whom all things were done in parables. Evidently, this method of teaching could not have been adopted for the people, in contradistinction to the disciples, and as a judicial measure, since even in the first series of parables three were addressed to the disciples, after the people had been dismissed. On the other hand, in answer to the disciples, Jesus specifically marks this as the difference

between the teaching given to them and the parables spoken to the people, that the designed effect of those spoken to the people was judicial: to complete that hardening of heart which, in its commencement had been caused by their voluntary rejection of what they had heard. Since not only the people, but the disciples as well were taught by parables, the hardening effect must not be ascribed to the parabolic mode of teaching. Irrespective of other circumstances, these parables spoken to the crowd were at least as easily understood as those spoken later only to the disciples. It seems clear that the basis of the different effect of them on the unbelieving multitude and on the believing disciples was not objective, or caused by the substance or form of the parables. It was rather subjective, caused by the different standpoint of the two classes of hearers towards the Kingdom of God.

This explanation removes what otherwise would be a serious difficulty. For it seems impossible to believe that Jesus would have adopted this special mode of teaching for the purpose of concealing the truth by which those might have been saved who heard him. But this was the effect of the parables on some. They also indicate, with at least equal clearness, that the cause of this hardening lay not in the parabolic method of teaching, but rather in the state of spiritual insensitivity at which, by their own guilt, they had previously arrived. Through this, what in other circumstances would have conveyed spiritual instruction, became that which fatally darkened and dulled their minds and hearts.

The reason why Jesus adopted parabolic teaching lay in the altered circumstances of the case. All his former teaching had been plain. In it He had set forth by Word, and exhibited by fact (in miracles), that Kingdom of God which He had come to open to all believers. The hearers had now ranged themselves into two parties. Those who, whether temporarily or permanently, had admitted these principles, as far as they understood them, were His professing disciples. On the other hand, the Pharisaic party had now devised a consistent theory, according to which the acts and teaching of Jesus, were of Satanic origin. Christ must still preach the Kingdom for that was His purpose in coming into the world. Only the presentation of that Kingdom must now be for decision. It must separate the two classes, leading the one to a clearer understanding of the mysteries of the Kingdom, while the other class of hearers would now regard these mysteries as wholly unintelligible, incredible, and to be rejected. And the basis for this lay in the respective positions of these two classes towards the Kingdom. "Whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more in abundance; but whoever has not, from him shall be taken even that which he has." The mysterious manner in which they were presented in parables was suited to, and corresponded with, the character of the "mysteries of the Kingdom," now set forth, not for initial instruction, but for final decision. As the light from heaven falls on earthly objects, the shadows are cast. Our perception of them, and its mode, depend on the position which we occupy relative to the Light.

Within the parables, each would see according to his standpoint towards the Kingdom. This was in turn to determine by previous acceptance or rejection of that truth, which had been formerly set forth in a plain form in the teaching of Christ. Therefore, while to the opened eyes and hearing ears of the one class would be disclosed that which prophets and righteous men of old had desired but not attained; the other class who had voluntarily cast aside what they had would only come, in their seeing and hearing, the

final judgment of hardening. So would it be to each according to his standpoint. To the one would come the grace of final revelation, to the other the final judgment which had been their own choice as they voluntarily occupied their own positions relative to Jesus.

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k. 1ST SERIES OF PARABLES:
PARABLES SPOKEN TO THE MULTITUDE

(1) PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Mark 4:1-9
Matthew 13:1-9
Luke 8:4-8

1. Read Mark 4:1-9 entirely through one time.
(1) Matthew 13:1-13 (2) Luke 8:4-8
2. Read Mark 4:1
(1) Mark 2:13 (2) Luke 5:1
3. Read Mark 4:2-9
(1) No references

Mark 4:1-9

- 1 On another occasion he began to teach by the sea. A very large crowd gathered around him so that he got into a boat on the sea and sat down. And the whole crowd was beside the sea on land.
- 2 And he taught them at length in parables, and in the course of his instruction he said to them,
- 3 "Hear this! A sower went out to sow.
- 4 And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up.
- 5 Other seed fell on rocky ground where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep.
- 6 And when the sun rose, it was scorched and it withered for lack of roots.
- 7 Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it and it produced no grain.
- 8 And some seed fell on rich soil and produced fruit. It came up and grew and yielded thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold."
- 9 He added, "Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear."

Overview of Mark 4:1-34 from JBC:

This passage is an edited unit comprising three parables (verses 3-9, 26-29, 30-32), two sayings (verses 21-23, 24-25), the interpretation of a parable (verses 10, 13-20), a saying about the purpose of parables (verses 11-12), an introduction (verses 1-2), and a

conclusion (verses 33-34). Its fused character appears from the following: (1) At the beginning and end (verses 1, 33-34) Jesus is addressing the crowds from a boat; in verse 10 the scene changes and Jesus is alone with the disciples. (2) The saying in verses 11-12 separates the sower parable (verses 3-9) from its interpretation (verses 13-20). (3) This interpretation as well as the sayings (verses 21-25), although addressed to the same audience, are each introduced by Mark's typical linking formula (verses 13, 21, 24), "and he said to them." (4) The interpretation of the parable of the sower is itself a catechetical rereading of Jesus' original parable (verses 3-9). (5) The question in verse 10 receives two answers with two different introductory formulas: In verse 11 Jesus gives a generalizing explanation of why he speaks in parables; this is introduced by another formula. In verses 13-20 he explains only the sower parable; this is introduced by yet another formula, which also occurs in 7:18 to introduce the interpretation of a specific parabolic saying. Since the interpretations of the parables probably did not circulate independently of the parables themselves, and that of verses 13-20 is clearly not the one primarily intended by Jesus, it is likely that in the pre-Markan tradition the interpretation was immediately joined to the parable, just as 7:18b-25 was joined to 7:15.

Several stages in the elaboration of this passage may be conjectured: (1) The earliest tradition combined the three parables by the pre-Markan formula found in verses 26 and 30. (2) Either because the original point of Jesus' parable of the sower became obscure, or because the early church wished to draw a new catechetical lesson from it, the allegorical interpretation found in verses 13-20 was elaborated and joined to Jesus' parable by means of the question in verse 10 and the formula in verse 11. In Mark's source the disciples most likely questioned Jesus not about his parables in general but about the parable of the sower in particular. (3) Into this complex the Mark introduced a second and more generalizing answer in verses 11-12, introduced by his typical formula, "and he said to them", and accordingly changed the singular "parable" to "parables" (verse 10). Finally he introduced two other parabolic sayings in verses 21-23 and 24-25. Moreover he has worked over the framework and has expanded the details about the audience in verse 10 by the addition of verses 11f.. The three stages of the tradition (Jesus...the primitive church...Mark) are recognizable throughout the whole of Mark's Gospel, but nowhere as clearly as in chapter 4.

Overview of verses 1-9 from IB:

This is the "chapter of parables", although as Mark recognizes (in verses 2, 33-34), the parables given here are only a selection. In two cases (verses 26 and 30) the subject of the parable is given as the Kingdom of God, but this is only a general classification. Those two parables deal with the spread or extension -- or "coming" -- of the Kingdom; the others (the sower and the lamp) with the proper response to the gospel. It is only in a very general way that the subject of the chapter can be made out; it is not organized about one specific theme, like the themes, say, on the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. Mark is probably using an earlier, possibly written collection of Jesus' parables.

Verse 1:

[On another occasion he began to teach by the sea.](#) -- This notice resumes the narrative of 3:7-12 after the Marcan interruption of 3:13-35. (JBC)

Verses 1-2:

The picturesque setting, characteristically disregarded by Mark in verse 10, prepares for the privacy in verse 36. The “other boats” in verse 36 were probably thought of as present from the start. “Many things”--Mark does not specify what “things,” for it is not part of his purpose to give an account of Jesus’ teaching. This he perhaps presupposes as already familiar to his readers--or possibly he is so greatly concerned with Jesus’ mighty deeds, and with the heroic ethics of discipleship, that he neglects other elements in Jesus’ teaching. (IB)

Verse 3:

[A sower went out to sow](#) -- Although the parable begins without an introductory formula, what is meant is that “It is the case with God’s kingdom as with a sower who ...” (JBC)

Verses 3-9:

The parable does not state in so many words the point of the comparison; hence, the admonition in verse 9, appealing to the hearers to exercise their understanding. The figure of a sower scattering seed was frequently used in the ancient world for the teacher (for example in Plato’s *Laws*)-- and quite naturally, since some hearers, or students, received the seed and brought forth a harvest, while upon others it fell without effect. The parable is accordingly not primarily a parable of the sower, nor yet of different kinds of ground, and its purpose is to show how various hearers respond to the message of the gospel--in the first instance to Jesus’ own message. It may be thought to belong to a late period of his ministry, and to reflect somewhat disillusioning experience: only the fourth kind of soil is receptive and productive. But the truth is that all sowing involves some loss, and it is no mere 25% of the seed that bears fruit--the parable is by no means pessimistic in tone. The “good ground” is presumably most of the field. The implication of the parable as a whole, strongly suggested at the close of verse 9 is that men could choose to hear and respond. The Gnostics held that only the perfectly illuminated--that is, themselves-- could truly “hear”; but this was surely a perversion of Jesus’ meaning. However, it is not certain that Mark did not have some such idea: to some the “mystery” was “given”; from others it was withheld. The experience of Christian evangelism showed, then as now, that some hearers are--as the Salvation Army has described them-- “gospel-proof.” Luke the parable of two houses, at the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:24-27), this parable was doubtless intended to be an admonition to responsive hearing, and was not a mere reflection on the experience of the teacher. But it could be interpreted as Mark has explained it, as we shall see later.

Verses 4-8:

[along the path, on rocky ground, among briars, into good soil](#) -- The parable consists essentially in a contrast between three types of unfruitful soil and the good soil in which the seed grows to maturity. It is on the good soil that the accent falls (cf. the Pharisee and the publican; Luke 18:9-14). God’s kingdom, like an abundant harvest (cf. Psalm 76:17; Hosea 6:11; Isaiah 27:6), will surely come despite the various setbacks encountered by the sower. Such a lesson is in accord with a more advanced stage of Jesus’ ministry, when reality seemed to belie the expectations of the people awaiting a greater purification before the eschaton (cf. Matthew 3:10-12 par.). Jesus’ parable gives assurance: despite all the disillusionments engendered by the course of his ministry, it is still only the preparatory phase of God’s kingdom. Between his ministry, apparently so

modest, and the glorious coming of God's kingdom, Jesus establishes a cause-and-effect relationship, comparable to that between the sowing and the harvest. (JBC)

Verse 8:

[thirtyfold, sixtyfold, hundredfold](#) -- A 20 to 1 ratio would have been considered an extraordinary harvest. Jesus' strikingly large figures are intended to underscore the exceptional quality of God's glorious kingdom still to come. An implicit warning to be prepared for the coming of God's kingdom by an upright life is the secondary lesson that is taught in the allegorical interpretation of the parable in verses 13-20. (JBC)

Verse 9:

[whoever has ears to hear, let him hear](#) -- This verse, appended to the parable as an introduction to its interpretation implies that not everyone is capable of understanding the parable. (JBC)

Summary from LToJC:

The first parable is that of Him who sowed. We can almost picture to ourselves Jesus seated in the prow of the boat, as He points His hearers to the rich plain where the young barley is still in its first green of its growing, giving promise of a future harvest. Like this is the Kingdom of Heaven which He has come to proclaim. Like what? Not yet that of the harvest, which is still in the future, but like that field over there. The sower has gone forth to sow the good seed. If we bear in mind the manner of sowing peculiar to those times, the parable gains in vividness. According to Jewish authorities there was twofold sowing, as the seed was either cast by the hand, or by means of cattle. In the case of cattle, a sack with holes was filled with seeds and laid on the back of the animal, so that as it moved forward the seed was scattered thickly. Thus it might well be, that it would not only fall on good ground, but it would also fall indiscriminately on the beaten roadway, on stony places where it was thinly covered with soil, or where the thorns had not been cleared away, or even in the undergrowth from the thorn-hedge that crept into the field. What meaning would all this convey to the Jewish hearers of Jesus? How could this sowing and growing be like the Kingdom of God? Certainly not in the sense in which they expected it. To them it was only a rich harvest, when all Israel would bear plenty of fruit. Again, what was the seed, and who was the sower? Or what could be meant by the various kinds of soil and their unproductiveness?

To us, as explained by our Lord, all this seems plain. But to them there could be no possibility of understanding, but much occasion for misunderstanding it, unless they stood in right relationship to the Kingdom of God. The initial necessary condition was to believe that Jesus was the Divine Sower, and His Word the Seed of the Kingdom; not other Sower than He, not other Seed of the Kingdom than His Word. If this were admitted, they had at least the right ideas for understanding this "mystery of the Kingdom." According to the Jewish view, the Messiah was to appear in outward pomp, and by display of power he was to establish the Kingdom. But this was the very idea of the Kingdom, with which Satan had tempted Jesus at the outset of His ministry. In opposition to it was the reception of the Seed of the Word. That reception would depend on the nature of the soil; that is, on the mind and heart of the hearers. The Kingdom of God was within; it came neither by a display of power, nor even by the fact that it was Israel, to whom the Gospel-hearers were the field, on which the seed of the Kingdom was

sown. He had brought the Kingdom; the Sower had gone forth to sow. This was of free grace--the Gospel. But the seed might fall on the roadside, and so perish without ever springing up. Or it might fall on rocky soil, and then spring up rapidly, but it would wither before it showed any promise of fruit. Or it might fall where the thorns grew along with, and more rapidly than, the seed. It would then show promise of producing fruit; the barley might appear, but that fruit would not come to ripeness (or perfection) because the thorns growing more rapidly would choke the barley.

If the disciples failed to comprehend the whole lesson of this "mystery of the Kingdom", we can believe how utterly strange and un-Jewish such a parable of the Messianic kingdom must have sounded to them, who had been influenced by the Pharisaic representations of the person and teaching of Christ. At the same time these very hearers were, unconscious to themselves, fulfilling what Jesus was speaking to them in the parable.

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4. Read Matthew 13:1-9 entirely through one time.

(1) Mark 4:1-9

(2) Luke 8:4-8

Matthew 13:1-9

- 1 On that day, Jesus went out of the house and sat down by the sea.
- 2 Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd stood along the shore.
- 3 And he spoke to them at length in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow.
- 4 And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and birds came and ate it up.
- 5 Some fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep,
- 6 and when the sun rose it was scorched, and it withered for lack of roots.
- 7 Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it.
- 8 But some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold.
- 9 Whoever has ears ought to hear."

Overview of Matthew 13:1-52 from JBC:

The parable in the NT designates a wise saying or fictitious story used to Jesus to expound his teaching. The roots of these literary forms lie in the OT, particularly in the wisdom literature, and in the rabbinical literature. The fictitious anecdote leads the listener to concede a point that he does not immediately perceive as applicable to himself (see II Samuel 12:1-14; 14:1-11; I Kings 20:35-40). The story also sharpens the curiosity and attracts attention. The rabbinical parables, of which about 2000 are counted in rabbinical literature, are told in answer to the question of a disciple and show that the scope of the answer is broader than the disciple had perceived. These purposes are all apparent in the parables of Jesus.

For most of the parables of the Gospels it is possible to find a situation in the life and teaching of Jesus himself and a situation in the life and teaching of the primitive community. The parables were modified in the teaching of the community; such

modifications can be seen in comparing different versions of the same parable in different Gospels. The commentaries on the parables (see 13:18-23, 36-43) and most allegorical features are almost universally regarded by modern scholars as expansions made by the primitive church. Other modifications include the creation of a new setting for the parable and the addition of a saying of Jesus.

The collection of parables is one of the two extended discourses in Mark, and Matthew uses the entire collection except for Mark 4:26-29, adding other parables drawn both from Q and from a private source. Matthew abbreviates Mark less in the discourses than in the narratives; here he follows Mark in placing the teaching in a boat by the seashore; Luke alters the scene.

Overview on 13:1-58 from IB:

This chapter illustrates Matthew's attempt to combine the chronological and the topical methods. He follows Mark's framework as far as he can, but Mark and his other sources are not arranged according to a consistent plan. At this point in Mark comes an important collection of parables, which Matthew adopts and expands, using it as a general discourse on the kingdom of heaven, its acceptance and rejection. The two previous chapters have led up to this. Despite the varied character of the material, the result is amazingly appropriate. The evangelist thinks of most of this discourse as addressed to the crowds, but there are asides to the disciples.

Verses 1-3a:

This is the introductory part of this passage. Jesus certainly said "many things in parables," and Matthew has already used teaching which be so classified (for example; 7:24-27; 11:16-17). The term parable covers a variety of forms. It includes (1) stories drawn from life, or fictitious stories, to illustrate one and only one point--the "true parable" (for example; 20:1-16; Luke 16:1-8a); (2) example stories (for example, Luke 10:29-37); (3) brief metaphorical sayings or similes (7:16); and (4) an occasional allegory (Mark 12:1-12). (IB)

Verse 3:

This parable is a simple description of the process of plowing in Palestine, of the type of ground upon which seed is sown, and of the usual results. The "road" is not the highway, but the soil trodden hard in paths through the fields. The wild thorns, the most common weed in the country, are not cleared before plowing but turned under by the plow. The fields are sown throughout, even in the edges and corners where the limestone base lies very near the surface. Verse 9 is a saying that indicates that the preceding utterance has more than a superficial meaning. (JBC)

Verse 3b:

A vivid description has been illustrated concerning how "a sower went out to sow." In Palestine seed is sown before the plowing, and thus some of it falls on ground which only later is seen to be unsuitable. (IB)

Verse 4:

"Along the path" may mean "by the path" or actually on it, where the "birds" could see it. (IB)

Verse 5:

"Rocky ground" could mean "ground full of rocks"; but, more probably, it means soil which thinly covers a rock ledge. The seed sprouts "immediately" because the soil is

warmed by the rock. (IB)

Verse 8:

Setting aside for the moment the explanation given in the Gospel (verses 28-23), one observes that verse 8 is a very apt conclusion. Modern interpreters are at variance on the meaning of the parable, possibly because they try to give the parable a more precise meaning than it was intended to convey. The reign (or the proclamation of the reign) is certainly the central theme of the parable. The reign will arrive in spite of obstacles; it is as infallible as the growth of the harvest, which reaches maturity and even richness in spite of what seem to be nearly insuperable difficulties. One perceives the optimism that should inspire the preachers of the Gospel and is assured that such opponents as the Pharisees in the present context will not prevail; these responses are inferred, not stated. The parable is presented as a theme on which one can reflect and from which one can draw as much meaning as one wishes: on this basis the earliest explanation of the parable (verses 18-23) was composed. (JBC)

Josephus speaks of the unusual fertility of the plain of Gennesaret (*Jewish War*. 3. 10.8.). Mark's "thirtyfold and sixty fold and a hundredfold" gives a better emphasis, but Matthew reverses the order. In the United States, where the average yield of wheat for the country is fifteen to twenty bushels per acre, twenty fold or thirty fold would be average, and a good crop might return forty times the sowing or more. Higher yields could be expected in a warm climate where soil is exceptionally fertile, but in any case "a hundredfold" is a large figure which Jesus chooses for the purpose of emphasis. (IB)

Verse 9:

"To hear" is omitted by some of the best Alexandrian and OL manuscripts and the Sinaitic Syriac. Matthew left it out for the sake of smoothness, but it was added again from Mark 4:9. There it may represent a Semitic idiom: hence "let him who has ears listen!" (IB)

* * * * *

5. Read Luke 8:4-8 entirely through one time.
(1) Matthew 13:1-9 (2) Luke 8:4-8
6. Read Luke 8:4-7
(1) No reference
7. Read Luke 8:8
(1) Matthew 11:15 (3) Mark 4:23
(2) Matthew 13:43 (4) Luke 14:35

Luke 8:4-8

- 4 When a large crowd gathered, with people from one town after another journeying to him, he spoke in a parable.
- 5 "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path and was trampled, and the birds of the sky ate it up.
- 6 Some seed fell on rocky ground, and when it grew, it withered for lack of

- moisture.
- 7 Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it.
- 8 And some seed fell on good soil, and when it grew, it produced fruit a hundredfold." After saying this, he called out, "Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear."

Overview of Luke 8:4-18 from JBC:

See Mark 4:1-9; Matthew 13:10-15. "Parable" is very difficult to define, not only because there are between 30 and 72 different parables in the Gospels but also because the term is applied to many different kinds of literary pieces: a solemn sentence (Mark 7:17); counsel (Luke 14:7); metaphor (Luke 4:23) two short images (Luke 5:36; 6:39); stories (Luke 13:6), and yet the term is not used of such a typical parable as that of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37). Perhaps, it is best to conclude very generally that a parable is a story illustrative of some teaching of Jesus. The parable is more than a "mere analogy", because an inward affinity exists between the natural order and the spiritual order; the Kingdom of God is intrinsically like the processes of nature and the daily life of men. Luke adapts parables as he does other material drawn from his sources: He abbreviates the parable of the sower; he adds clarifying elements (5:36; 11:21f.), doctrinal ideas (8:12), or something similar (11:9-13); he will even reinterpret (20:10-12). In fact, Luke has the largest number of parables; he introduces parables with a reference to the coming of Christ (18:8b; 19:11-14, 27), to the mission to the Gentiles (14:22f.); he adds instructions on prayer (11:9-13), on the responsibility of the apostles (12:41), on renouncement (14:33; 16:9-13), and on humility (17:7-10; 18:14b).

Overview on verses 4-8 from JBC:

This parable corresponds with Mark 4:1-9, which one should compare; it would be better to call it the "parable of the different sowings", the better to bring out its main meaning. The sower walks over the field, fallow since the harvest, covered with thorns, and crossed by a footpath made by trespassers. Recently softened by the winter rains, it is ready for seeding. Important to note is that "in Palestine plowing comes after sowing" (Mishnah); this explains why the seed falls where it does. Once sown, it is plowed under, and all else with it -- the thorns and the footpath as well.

Overview from IB:

The Marcan source, which Luke abandoned at 6:17, is resumed, and is followed with minor transpositions and abbreviations until 9:51.

The parable is clear. Seed sown carelessly, or in poor soil, or on land infested with thorns, is unfruitful; but fertile soil produces abundantly and assures a good harvest. The only problem, as so often in the study of Jesus' teaching, is to recover the parables' application. Mark's interpretation (Mark 4:13-20; cf. Luke 8:9-15) is a Christian allegory, but its equation of "seed" and "the word" probably does justice to the point of the original. Jesus meant the parable to encourage the disciples in the faith that his proclamation of "the good news of the kingdom of God" would prove fruitful. "Sowing" in rabbinical literature is a frequent metaphor for "teaching." A similar parable in extra-biblical literature illustrates the doctrine that not all mankind will be saved.

Verse 4:

Luke suppresses the notice that the crowd made Jesus enter a boat and put out a

little from the shore to address them (Mark 4:1). (JBC)

In Mark's version Jesus had been teaching "beside the sea" and was forced by the size of the crowd to put out in a boat and teach offshore. Luke had already used this stereotyped setting in 5:3, and substitutes an even vaguer one at this point. "A parable" for Mark's "parables," which had referred to the whole collection (Mark 4:1-34). (IB)

Verse 5:

on the path -- The Greek phrase does not necessarily mean "alongside" the path; the seed fell on the trespasser's path, which was to be plowed under, but before this was done it lay on the hardened surface. (JBC)

In accordance with Greek usage "a sower" marks him as a representative of a class. "And was trodden under foot" is an amplification of the Marcan source. (IB)

Verse 6:

rocky soil -- Many outcroppings of limestone are found in Palestinian fields. (JBC)

Verses 6-7:

"Rock" for the word in Mark that means "a shallow crust of soil covering bedrock." According to Mark, the shoot was scorched, because it had no root; according to this version, it "withered... because it had no moisture." (IB)

Verse 7:

thornbushes -- These would have sprung up since the harvest and would not yet have been uprooted; they would be plowed under along with the seed. (JBC)

Verse 8:

a hundredfold -- Luke has simplified the obscure Marcan text. "Hundredfold" is an expression for an abundant crop from good soil (see Genesis 26:12). The point: The seed sown on good soil yields an abundant harvest. (JBC)

An abbreviation that produces only the highest estimate that is given in Mark of the yield. For the fertility of the soil in Palestine under good conditions cf. Genesis 26:12 (IB)

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(2) THE SEED GROWING SECRETLY

Mark 4:26-29

8. Read Mark 4:26-29 entirely through one time.

(1) James 5:7

Mark 4:26-29

- 26 He said, "This is how it is with the kingdom of God; it is as if a man were to scatter seed on the land
- 27 and would sleep and rise night and day and the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how.
- 28 Of its own accord the land yields fruit, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.
- 29 And when the grain is ripe, he wields the sickle at once, for the harvest has come."

Overview from IB:

Both Matthew and Luke have omitted this parable--Matthew substitutes for it the parable of the tares (Matthew 13:24-30)--but it can scarcely be thought that it was not in their "edition" of Mark. Perhaps they stumbled at the word "of itself", as if the kingdom spread by some "automatic" or physical principle, apart from the will of God or the response of men. But the central teaching of the parable is the certainty, indeed the inevitability, of the Kingdom's coming, once the seed (verses 3-8) was sown; this is surely the Lord's doing and beyond the realm of human comprehension or endeavor: the farmer "knows not how."

Verse 29, quoting Joel 3:13, may be viewed as an apocalyptic appendage to the parable; the sower's function is only to sow the seed, wait patiently during the time of growth, and then "put in the sickle" when the harvest comes. But the addition confuses the picture: God is the harvester, but God is not the farmer--"he knows not how" could scarcely be said of God.

The hidden growth of the seed is not so much evidence of the presence of the kingdom, though it is sometimes so interpreted, as of its proximity and certainty. The time is near; the seed has already been sown, and the harvest must inevitably follow before long by the slow relentless march of the seasons; nature's laws are really the laws of God. Even apart from verse 29, the tone of the parable is eschatological; what it meant to Mark and his readers must have been the assurance that the apparent delay in the coming of the kingdom was only apparent, not real. The final result had been guaranteed from the beginning.

Verse 26:

[as if a man were to scatter seed on the land](#) -- Like the sower parable, this parable is essentially a contrast between the inactivity of the farmer after sowing, and the harvest (the fulfillment of God's kingdom). The kingdom will surely come because it has already entered into the world in Jesus' ministry, and like the seed will inevitably produce a harvest. This point is expressed in verse 29: but when the grain is ripe, he at once puts in the "sickle", because the growth, however, also appears to be essential to the parable. (JBC)

Verses 27-28:

[the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how](#) -- Jesus thus makes the additional point that God's kingdom does not come abruptly but grows inevitably from hidden beginnings. Jesus' parable may originally have been both an assurance that the coming of God's kingdom was inevitable, and an apology for his not attempting to establish this kingdom by a forceful intervention; to do so would have been to nip the grain prematurely. (JBC)

Summary from LToJC:

Whether or not this parable (found only in Mark) was spoken afterwards in private to the disciples, or, as seems more likely, at the first, and to the people by the sea-shore, this appears the fittest place for inserting it. If the first parable, concerning the sower and the field of sowing, would prove to all who were outside the discipleship a "mystery", while to those within it would unfold knowledge of the very mysteries of the Kingdom, this would even more fully be the case in regard to this second and

supplementary parable. In it we are only viewing that portion of the field, which the former parable had described as good soil. "So is the Kingdom of God, as if a man had cast the seed on the earth, and slept and rose, night and day, and the seed sprang up and grew: how, he know not himself. Autonomous (self-acting) the earth bears fruit: first the blade, then the ear, and then the full barley in the ear. But when the fruit presents itself, immediately he sends forth the sickle, because the harvest is come." The meaning of all this seems plain enough. As the Sower, after the seed has been cast into the ground, can do no more; he goes to sleep at night, and rises by day, in the meantime the seed is growing, the Sower knows not how, and as his activity ceases until the time that the fruit is ripe, when he immediately thrusts in the sickle--so is the Kingdom of God. The seed is sown; but its growth goes on, dependent on the law inherent in seed and soil, dependent also on Heaven's blessing of sunshine and showers, until the moment of ripeness when the harvest-time is come. We can only go about our daily work, or lie down to rest, as day and night alternate; we see, but know not the how of the growth of the seed. Yet, assuredly it will ripen, and when that moment arrived, immediately the sickle is thrust in, for the harvest is come. So also with the Sower. His outward activity on earth was in the sowing, and it will be in the harvesting. What lies between them is of that other Dispensation of the Spirit, until He again sends forth His reapers into the field. But all this must have been to those "without" a great mystery, in no way compatible with Jewish notions; while to them "within" it proved a yet greater, and very needful unfolding of the mysteries of the Kingdom, with very wide application of them.

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(3) THE WEEDS AMONG THE WHEAT
Matthew 13:24-30

9. Read Matthew 13:24-30 entirely through one time.
 - (1) No reference
10. Read Matthew 13:24-29
 - (1) No reference
11. Read Matthew 13:30
 - (1) Matthew 3:12

Matthew 13:24-30

- 24 He proposed another parable to them. "The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field.
- 25 While everyone was asleep his enemy came and sowed weeds all through the wheat, and then went off.
- 26 When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well.
- 27 The slaves of the householder came to him and said, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where have the weeds come from?'
- 28 He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' His slaves said to him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

- 29 He replied, 'No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them.
- 30 Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters, "First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn.'""

Overview from JBC:

Matthew omits the parable of the seed that grows secretly (Mark 4:26-30), and gives this parable instead, peculiar to himself.

Overview from IB:

The mustard seed and the leaven (verses 31-33) are twin parables, and so are the hidden treasure and the costly pearl (verses 44-46). The story of the tares has some similarity in wording to Mark 4:26-30, a parable not found in any other Gospel. It has been suggested that Matthew rewrote Mark's parable into the parable of the tares in order to provide a twin for the parable of the seine (the net, verse 47-48), and then furnished both with explanations. Mark 4:26-30 was intended to teach that men can only sow the seed, while God gives the increase (I Corinthians 3:6), but it was a very obscure parable, and we can easily understand how the later evangelist thought that it needed the explanation which he gave.

Verse 25:

weeds -- Or, "darnel." The weed, "tares" or "cockle" in the older English versions, is commonly recognized as darnel, a weed that has a resemblance to wheat. This parable is explained in verses 36-43. The composition of the parable in its present form reflects the experience of the primitive community. (JBC)

"Slept" is a word from Mark 4:27. The "enemy" is needed for the story only if the parable is an allegory which refers to the devil (verse 39), for any field might have a certain proportion of weeds. One can, however, imagine a poisonous bearded darnel, which grows to about the same height as wheat and was regarded by the rabbis as a perverted kind of wheat. (IB)

Verse 28:

Slaves would not ordinarily ask permission to do this, although peasants today sometimes cut off the heads of grain above the weeds. These "servants" are of course disciples of Jesus who wish to purge the church of unfaithful members; and the purpose of the question is to bring out the point of verse 30. (IB)

Verse 30:

"Let both grow together"--This is not emphasized in the interpretation (verses 36-43), but it is the point of the parable. It is disastrous to try to achieve a "pure" church in which there are no sinners. This wise principle was followed by Paul (I Corinthians 4:5), although he occasionally had to excommunicate a great offender. The church discipline of the late first and second centuries was, however, generally more rigorous (for example, Hebrews 6:4-8; 12:15-17; I John 5:16-17), but in the third century, under the influence of Bishop Callistus of Rome, Matthew's policy became dominant. To gather the "weeds first" and bind them in "bundles" is not the usual practice of farmers. Furthermore, the reapers do not seem to be the same people as the slaves in verse 27. Both these touches indicate that this is an allegory of the Last Judgment. (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

The “mystery” is made still further mysterious, or else it is still further unfolded, in this parable concerning the tares sown among the wheat. According to the common view, these tares represent what is botanically known as the “bearded darnel”, a poisonous rye-grass, very common in the East, entirely lie wheat until the ear appears, or else (according to others) the “creeping wheat” or “couch-grass,” of which the roots creep underground and become intertwined with those of the wheat. But the parable gains in meaning if we bear in mind that, according to ancient Jewish (and, indeed, modern Eastern) ideas, the tares were not of different seed, but only a degenerate kind of wheat. Whether in legend or symbol, Rabbinism has it that even the ground had been guilty of fornication before the judgment of the flood, so that when wheat was sown tares sprang up. The Jewish hearers of Jesus would, therefore, think of these tares as some degenerate kind of wheat, until the fruit appeared; noxious, poisonous, and requiring to be separated from the wheat, if the latter was not to become useless.

Let us now try to realize the scene pictured. Once more we see the field on which the barley is growing--we know not how. The sowing time is past. The Kingdom of Heaven is become like to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But in time that men sleep came his enemy and over-sowed tares in (upon), the midst of the barley, and went away. Thus far the picture is true to nature, since such deeds of enmity were, and still are, common in the East. And so matters would go on unobserved, since, whatever kind of tares may be meant, it would, from their likeness, be for some time impossible to distinguish them from the barley. When the herbage grew and made fruit, then appeared also the tares. What follows is equally true to fact, since, according to the testimony of travelers, most strenuous efforts are always made in the East to weed out the tares. Similarly, in the parable, the servants of the householder are introduced as inquiring from where had these tares come; and on the reply: “A hostile person has done this,” they further ask: “Do you want us to go and pull them up?” The absence of any reference to the rooting up or burning the tares, is intended to indicate that the only object which the servants had in view was to keep the wheat pure and unmixed for the harvest. But if they did so their final object would have been frustrated by the procedure which their inconsiderate zeal suggested. Indeed, it would have been possible to distinguish the tares from the barley, and the Parable proceeds on this very assumption--for by their fruit they would be known. But in the present instance separation would have been impossible without, at the same time, uprooting some of the wheat. For the tares had been sown right into the midst of the barley, and not merely by the side of it; and their roots and blades must have become intertwined. So they must continue to grow together until harvest time. At that time, such danger would no longer exist, for the period of growing was past, and the barley had to be gathered into the barn. Then would be the right time to bid the reapers first gather the tares into bundles for burning, so that afterwards the barley, pure and unmixed, might be stored in the garner.

True to life as this picture is, yet the parable was, of all others, perhaps the most un-Jewish and therefore mysterious and unintelligible. Therefore, the disciples especially asked for an explanation of this one only, which from its main subject they rightly designated as the parable of the tares. Yet this was also perhaps the most important for them to understand. For already the “Kingdom of Heaven is become like” this, although

the appearance of fruit has not yet made it manifest, that tares have been sown right into the midst of the barley. But they would soon have to learn it in bitter experience and as a grievous temptation, and not only as regarded the impressionable, fickle multitude, nor even the narrower circle of professing followers of Jesus, but that right there very midst there was a traitor. They would learn it more and more, as we have to learn it to all ages. Most needful, yet most mysterious also, is this other lesson, as the experience of the church has shown, since almost every period of her history has witnessed--not only the recurrence of the proposal to make the barley unmixed, while growing, by gathering out the tares, but actual attempts towards it. All such behavior has proved failures, because the field is the wide world, not a narrow sect; because the tares have been sown into the midst of the barley, and by the enemy; and because if such gathering were to take place the roots and blades of the tares and barley would be found so intertwined that harm would come to the barley. But why try to gather the tares altogether unless from undiscerning zeal? Or what have we, who are only the owner's servants, to do with it, since we are not bidden of Him to get rid of it? The barley must be garnered in the heavenly storehouse, and the tares bound in bundles to be burned. Then the harvesters shall be the angels of Christ, the gathered tares "all the stumbling-blocks and those who do lawlessness," and their burning becomes the "casting of them into the oven of the fire."

More mysterious still, and, if possible, even more needful was the instruction that the enemy who sowed the tares was the Devil. To the Jews, even to us, it may seem a mystery, that "in the Messianic Kingdom of Heaven" there should be a mixture of tares with the barley, the more mysterious that the Baptist had predicted that the coming of the Messiah would thoroughly purge His floor. But those who were capable of receiving it, it would be explained by the fact that the Devil was the Enemy of Christ and of his kingdom, and that he had sowed those tares. This would, at the same time, be the most effective answer to the Pharisaic charge that Jesus was the Incarnation of Satan, and the vehicle of his influence. And once instructed in this, they would have further to learn the lessons of faith and patience, connected with the fact that the good seed of the Kingdom grew in the field of the world, and that by the very conditions of its existence, separation by the hand of man was impossible as long as the barley was still growing. Yet this separation would surely be made in the great harvest, to certain, terrible loss of the children of the wicked man.

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(4) THE MUSTARD SEED

Mark 4:30-34
Matthew 13:31-32
Luke 13:18-19

12. Read Mark 4:30-34 entirely through one time.
 - (1) No reference

13. Read Mark 4:30-32
(1) Matthew 13:31-32 (2) Luke 13:18-19

14. Read Mark 4:33-34
(1) Matthew 13:34

Mark 4:30-34

- 30 He said, "To what shall we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable can we use for it?"
- 31 It is like a mustard seed that, when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth.
- 32 But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade."
- 33 With many such parables he spoke the word to them as they were able to understand it.
- 34 Without parables he did not speak to them, but to his own disciples he explained everything in private.

Overview from IB:

In many ancient rabbinical parables (parables were commonly used by Jewish teachers), the point of comparison was only generally indicated; often a parable would begin with a question: "What is it like?" [that is, what is the situation--say, man's duty to God, or Israel's dependence on God--like?] It is like ...". It has been suspected that the words "the Kingdom of God", here and in verse 26, have been supplied by Mark, or by those who handed down the tradition before him. It is really the spread of the gospel, the growth or the coming of the kingdom, rather than the kingdom itself, which resembles a tiny mustard seed ("the smallest of all the seeds") from which grows a great bush, so huge that (as in Daniel 4:21) "the birds of the air can make nests in the shade." If we were to stress that word and then allegorize as we should say this describes the spread of the gospel and the growth of the church in apostolic times. But the original meaning pointed only to the contrast between the tiny beginnings and the eventual magnitude of the result: Jesus' ministry, and his small band of disciples, were the dawning point of the coming reign of God. For Mark this doubtless meant the eventual triumph of the gospel, when all nations (13:10; 14:9) should have heard it, and those in distant lands should have responded to the message. But Mark, as we have seen, was inclined to allegorize. It has sometimes been thought that since the parables in this chapter are agricultural, and refer to the sowing of seed, the day on which they were spoken (4:1) must have been in the early spring. But there is no reason to assume that Jesus could not have spoken them at any time in the year. Moreover, the Palestinian farmer's calendar and ours are not identical. Fall sowing in late October, spring in January and February.

Verse 31:

[the smallest of all the seeds](#) -- It is really not the smallest, but this is not the point. Jesus contrasts its insignificant beginnings with the unexpected size of the full-grown bush. (JBC)

Verse 32:

becomes the largest of plants -- Or, "it becomes the greatest of all trees." The tree as an image of God's rule is found in Judges 9:15 and in the Dead Sea Scrolls; in 8:4-9 where, as here, the comparison is based on Daniel 4:7-9, 11, 17-19; Ezekiel 17:23; 31:1-9. (JBC)

the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade -- This is an allusion to Daniel 4:21 where God's kingdom is compared to that of Nebuchadnezzar whose empire reached to the ends of the earth, giving shelter to all peoples. Both the contrast between the tiny seed and the full-grown tree, as well as the notion of its growth, are essential elements in the parable. They symbolize the organic continuity between Jesus' ministry, so disappointing to Jewish hopes, and the future Kingdom of God, which would encompass the Gentiles as well as Israel. (JBC)

Summary from LToJC:

The parables studied previously set forth another equally mysterious characteristic of the Kingdom: that of its development and power, as contrasted with its small and weak beginnings. In the parable of the mustard-seed this is shown as regards the relation of the Kingdom to the outer world; in that of the Leaven, in reference to the world with us. One exhibit's the extensiveness of the Kingdom, the other the intensiveness of its power; in both cases at first hidden, almost imperceptible, and seemingly wholly inadequate to the final result. Such parables must have been utterly unintelligible to all who did not see in the humble, despised Nazarene, and in his teaching, the Kingdom. But to those whose eyes, ears, and hearts had been opened, they would carry most needed instruction, and most precious comfort and assurance. Accordingly, we do not find that the disciples either asked or received an interpretation of these parables.

A few remarks will set the special meaning of these Parables more clearly before us. Here also the illustrations used may have been at hand. Close by the fields, covered with the fresh green or growing herbage, to which Jesus had pointed, may have been the garden with its growing herbs, bushes and plants, and the home of the householder, whose wife may at that moment have been in sight, busy preparing for the weekly provision of bread. At any rate, it is necessary to keep in mind the homeliness of these illustrations. The very idea of parables implies, not strict scientific accuracy, but popular pictorialness. It is characteristic of them to present vivid sketches that appeal to the popular mind, and exhibit such analogies of higher truths as can be readily perceived by all. Those addressed were not to weigh every detail, either logically or scientifically, but at once to recognize the aptness of the illustration as presented to the popular mind. Thus, as regards the first of these two parables, the seed of the mustard plant passed in popular parlance as the smallest of seeds. In fact, the expression "small as a mustard seed," had become proverbial, and was used, not only by our Lord, but frequently by the Rabbis, to indicate the smallest amount, such as the least drop of blood, the least defilement, or the smallest remnant of the sun in the sky. "But when it is grown, it is greater than the garden-herbs." Indeed, it looks no longer like a large garden-herb or shrub, but "becomes", or rather, appears like, "a tree"--as Luke puts it, "a great tree," of course, not in comparison with other trees, but with garden-shrubs. Such growth of the mustard seed was also a fact well known at the time, and indeed it is still observed in the East.

This is the main point in the parable. The other, concerning the birds which are

attracted to its branches and “lodge”--literally, “make tents”--there, or else under the shadow of it, is subsidiary. Pictorial, of course, this trait would be, and we can the more readily understand that the birds would be attracted to the branches or the shadow of the mustard-plant, when we know that mustard was in Palestine mixed with, or used as food for pigeons, and presumably would be sought by other birds. And the general meaning would the more easily be apprehended, that a tree, whose wide-spreading branches afforded a nest to the birds of heaven, was a familiar OT figure for a mighty kingdom that gave shelter to the nations. It is specifically used as an illustration of the Messianic Kingdom. Thus the parable would point to this, so full of mystery to the Jews, so explanatory of the mystery of the disciples; that the Kingdom of Heaven, planted in the field of the world as the smallest seed, in the most humble and unpromising manner, would grow until it far outstripped all other similar plants, and gave shelter to all nations under heaven. Thus the extensive power of the Kingdom (the parable of the Mustard-Seed) corresponded to the its intensive character (the parable of the Yeast), whether in the world at large or in the individual.

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15. Read Matthew 13:31-32 entirely through one time.
(1) Mark 4:30-32 (2) Luke 13:18-19
16. Read Matthew 13:31
(1) No reference
17. Read Matthew 13:32
(1) Exodus 17:23 (3) Daniel 4:7-9, 17-19
(2) Exodus 31:6

Matthew 13:31-32

- 31 He proposed another parable to them. "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field.
- 32 It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the "birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches."

Overview from JBC:

The mustard seed must have been proverbially small (see 17:20);but it is not the smallest of seeds, nor is the tree (more properly a shrub, which grows to a height of 10-12 feet) remarkably tall. The point of the parable is the contrast.

Overview from IB:

The parable of the mustard seed occurs in two different forms: Luke 13:18-19, which may represent Q, and Mark 4:30-32. Matthew has apparently woven these two sources together.

Verse 31:

“The kingdom of heaven is like” -- The longer introductions in Mark and Luke resemble more closely the rabbinical formula: “A parable. To what is the matter like? It is like,” and so on. “Mustard” was cultivated in Jesus’ time for its “seed” and also as a

vegetable. The rabbis regarded it as a “field” crop and forbade its planting in a garden (contrast Luke 13:19). (IB)

Verse 32:

dwelt in its branches -- Or, “nest in its branches.” These words are based on Daniel 4:21, but on no existing Greek version. No allegorical explanation is given, but it would be quite easy to form one. Without allegory the parable signifies the arrival of the reign from beginnings so small that they are hardly perceptible. The humble beginning of the reign in Jesus was a scandal to Judaism and even to his own disciples. (JBC)

It may grow to a height of ten feet or more. “Birds” do not, however, ordinarily “make nests in its branches.” This is a reference to Daniel 4:20-21, where Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom is likened to a great tree in which the birds of the air roost. The Babylonian king’s sovereignty was destined to come to an end, but God’s kingdom will increase. Its future greatness is out of all proportion to its seemingly insignificant beginnings in a group of Jesus’ disciples. Like the sower, this and the leaven are parables of encouragement. (IB)

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18. Read Luke 13:18-19 entirely through one time.
(1) Matthew 13:31-32 (2) Mark 4:30-32
19. Read Luke 13:18
(1) No reference
20. Read Luke 13:19
(1) Ezekiel 17:23-24 (2) Ezekiel 31:6

Luke 13:18-19

- 18 Then he said, "What is the kingdom of God like? To what can I compare it?
- 19 It is like a mustard seed that a person took and planted in the garden. When it was fully grown, it became a large bush and 'the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches.'"

Overview from JBC:

The fact that this parable is in Q and in Mark makes it one of the best attested elements in the teaching of Jesus.

Overview from IB:

A variant occurs in Mark 4:30-32. It had apparently been incorporated into a collection that Mark had used as a source. Luke omits the Marcan version at the point where he might have used it (following 8:18) and now employs the Q form. Matthew conflated Mark and Q and preserved the Marcan order.

The mustard seed was characterized by its rapid growth, and the whole process of growth was a mystery to the ancients. Therefore there are those who insist that the point of the parable is that the new age of God’s rule will come suddenly and mysteriously. But this is to do violence to the passage in the interests of a hypothesis. The parable turns

on the contrast between small beginnings and great results. Although the full realization of God's rule on earth as it is in heaven awaits the future, in some measure it is already manifest within the historical order.

Verse 18:

"He said therefore" is obviously editorial. Both Mark and Luke (Q) introduce the parable with a double question although they differ in the wording of it. Matthew substitutes a statement. (IB)

Verse 19:

garden -- Luke reveals his city background; this plant does not grow in gardens; it is found wild around the Sea of Galilee. It attains a height of 8 to 12 feet. (JBC)

birds of the sky -- From Daniel 4:11; cf. Ezekiel 17:23; 31:6; emphasis is upon the universal aspect of the kingdom. (JBC)

The smallness of a "mustard seed" was proverbial (cf. 17:6; Matthew 17:20) but it is the Marcan version (followed by Matthew in this detail) that draws specific attention to the fact. The mustard was not a "garden" plant in Galilee and therefore Matthew substitutes "field." It is said to grow to heights of ten or twelve feet. On several occasions in the OT (Ezekiel 17:22-23; 31:1-6; Daniel 4:10-12, 20-22) a kingdom is depicted as a "tree", and the extension of its power as the nesting of "birds" in its "branches". It is possible that the last clause is actually a quotation from one or other of these passages, and that it was added to the parable to give it a touch of allegory: the church will gather in even Gentile peoples! (IB)

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(5) THE YEAST

Matthew 13:33

Luke 13:20-21

21. Read Matthew 13:33.

(1) Luke 13:20-21

Matthew 13:33

33 He spoke to them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch was leavened."

Overview from JBC:

This parable is found in Q (Luke 18:20-21 par.). In its present form it falls into the same pattern with the parables of the sower and the mustard seed, illustrating again the irresistible growth of the reign from small beginnings.

three measures of wheat flour -- The size of the lump of dough is exaggerated to make the point. Leaven, mentioned rarely in the NT, is used only in this passage as a figure of something good (see 16:6; I Corinthians 5:6-8; Galatians 5:9). It is possible that the original saying has a force something like that of I Corinthians 5:6, and that it was given a different meaning when it was incorporated into the collection of the parables of

the reign.

Overview from IB:

This story contrasts the small amount of yeast with the large mass of leavened dough, and also hints at the miraculous, apocalyptic character of the growth. Although Paul (I Corinthians 5:6-8) and the rabbinical writers always use “leaven” as a symbol of evil influence and teaching (as the Gospels do also in 16:6, 12 = Mark 8:15), Jesus does not hesitate to employ it to describe the kingdom; and perhaps the parable was especially startling to the original readers for just this reason. The woman “hid” the yeast by dissolving “starter” from a previous baking in water and mixing it with dough. The “three measures” are three seahs, a very large amount, possibly a bushel. This perhaps calls attention to the vastness of the world, which the kingdom must transform, secretly and irresistibly.

Summary from LToJC:

This is the last of the parables addressed at this time to the people. We need not resort to ingenious methods of explaining “the three measures,” or seahs, of flour in which the leaven was hid. Three seahs were an ephah, of which the exact capacity differed in different districts. Nothing is conveyed in the three measures other than the common process of ordinary, everyday life. In this lies the very point of the parable, that the Kingdom of God, when received within, would seem like leaven hid, but would gradually pervade, assimilate, and transform the whole of our common life.

With this most un-Jewish and, to the unbelieving multitude, most mysterious characterization of the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus dismissed the people. Enough had been said to them, and for them, if they had but ears to hear. Now he was again alone with the disciples in “the house” at Capernaum, to which they had returned.

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22. Read Luke 13:20-21 entirely through one time.

(1) Matthew 13:33

Luke 13:20-21

20 Again he said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God?

21 It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed (in) with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch of dough was leavened."

Overview from IB:

The introduction in Matthew is a statement, and in Luke it is a rhetorical question. The parable was not in the collection used by Mark, but stood in Q as a companion to that of the mustard seed. No doubt Luke and his readers would interpret it as a prophecy of the spread of the gospel and the growth of the church. In its original application it probably illustrated the same truth as its twin: God is already asserting his sovereignty, and the mighty consequences of that fact will shortly be evident. “Leaven”-- Elsewhere in the NT (12:1; Matthew 16:6, 11; Mark 8:15; I Corinthians 5:6-8; Galatians 5:9) it is a symbol for evil, as often also in Jewish literature. Women did all the grinding as well as all the baking in the East. “Three measures” is a little over a bushel, which would be an

enormous quantity of flour for a single baking. Perhaps the large amount was mentioned to emphasize the mighty effects of God's rule. But cf. Genesis 18:6, where Sarah is said to have used "three measures of fine meal" in preparing cakes for three guests.

Verse 21:

leaven -- Once it is added, leaven inevitably transforms the mixture. (JBC)

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(6) THE LAMP

Mark 4:21-25

Luke 8:16-18

23. Read Mark 4:21-25 entirely through one time.
(1) Luke 8:16-18
24. Read Mark 4:21
(1) Matthew 5:15 (2) Luke 11:33
25. Read Mark 4:22
(1) Matthew 10:26 (2) Luke 12:2
26. Read Mark 4:23
(1) No reference
27. Read Mark 4:24
(1) Matthew 7:2 (2) Luke 6:38
28. Read Mark 4:25
(1) Matthew 13:12 (2) Luke 19:26

Mark 4:21-25

- 21 He said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be placed under a bushel basket or under a bed, and not to be placed on a lampstand?
- 22 For there is nothing hidden except to be made visible; nothing is secret except to come to light.
- 23 Anyone who has ears to hear ought to hear."
- 24 He also told them, "Take care what you hear. The measure with which you measure will be measured out to you, and still more will be given to you.
- 25 To the one who has, more will be given; from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away."

Overview from JBC:

In these verses Mark arranges a series of disconnected sayings into a double parable, 21-23 and 24-25.

Overview from IB:

This section, instead of going on with the collection of parables, continues the discussion on the right use of parables and the responsibility of the hearer for the proper understanding of them. One would never guess that the “inserted” verses 11-12 had preceded this section; the principle of “economy” or of “mystery” there set forth is wholly ignored in verses 21-25. Judging from the doublets to these verses (verse 21 = Matthew 5:15 = Luke 11:33; Verse 22 = Matthew 10:26 = Luke 12:2; verse 24 = Matthew 7:2 = Luke 6:38; verse 25 = Matthew 25:29 = Luke 19:26), it is probable that Mark has used Q, or its equivalent in oral tradition, at this point. The whole point of the section in its original meaning is the responsibility of those who hear to respond to (verses 23-24), cherish (verse 25), and proclaim (verses 21-22) the teaching--which is presumably the gospel, not “the mystery of the Kingdom (verse 11).

Verse 21:

[Is a lamp brought in to be placed under a bushel basket](#) -- This saying and its explanation in verse 22 correspond to 4:11-12; parables conceal the truth from outsiders, but the truth will ultimately be disclosed. (JBC)

Verses 21-22:

“candle” and “candlestick” should be “lamp” and “stand,” since candles were not used in first-century Palestine. The whole purpose of the hiding of the revelation in the past has been to make it known eventually--that is, now. This is somewhat like Paul’s idea of the secret hid from past generations, but now at last unveiled and proclaimed to the world; but Paul is thinking of the mystery of God’s dealings with mankind, and of the strange, unimaginable divine plan of salvation. Mark is thinking of the “mystery” of the kingdom (verse 11), though his source (in this case Q) cannot have held such a reference. The original point was that if God hides anything, it is with the purpose of ultimately revealing it; the temporary hiding is itself part of the total process of revelation--a profound view of the ways of God with men. Matthew and Luke understand the saying differently, and introduce it in other connections. Mark probably understands it to mean that the “mystery” (verse 11) entrusted to the first disciples was meant to be proclaimed by the apostolic church; that is, by the apostles after Jesus’ resurrection. (IB)

Verse 23:

This is repeated from verse 9, and stresses the importance of attentive and responsive hearing, like the apocalyptic “this calls for understanding” (Revelation 13:9, 18). The hearers, or readers, are reminded that the words have a higher sense, and are warned to seek for and find it. (IB)

Verses 24-25:

[The measure with which you measure will be measured out to you](#) -- Corresponding to 4:13-20, these sayings are a call to an attentive hearing of God’s word. (JBC)

The seriousness of the disciple’s or hearers responsibility is further stressed. The words “with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you” are perhaps a gloss from Matthew 7:2, with which they agree exactly; some early reader or copyist saw a connection between the two sayings and inserted the words at this point. Luke does not have them, and Matthew has no parallel to this section. Omitting them we read: “Take heed what you hear”; that is, “give heed to it,” “and still more will be given you.” The disciple grows in understanding and knowledge only as he attends carefully and

responsively to what he has already received. “Take heed” is scarcely a warning against false teaching. The principle is now carried further. “To him who has will more be given” (a saying, perhaps proverbial, which is strangely included in the parable of the talents [Matthew 25:29; Luke 19:26]). The meaning is that the one who already possesses some insight, and attends to what he hears from his teacher, will gain more knowledge and insight as he acts positively upon his present knowledge. The present Marcan interpretation of the saying seems more probable than the one given it in the parable of the talents (Q). Luke modifies the saying to read “how you hear; what he thinks that he has” (Luke 8:18). (IB)

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29. Read Luke 8:16-18 entirely through one time.
(1) Mark 4:21-25
30. Read Luke 8:16
(1) Matthew 5:15 (2) Luke 11:33
31. Read Luke 8:17
(1) Matthew 10:26 (2) Luke 12:2
33. Read Luke 8:18
(1) Matthew 13:12 (3) Luke 19:26
(2) Matthew 25:29

Luke 8:16-18

- 16 "No one who lights a lamp conceals it with a vessel or sets it under a bed; rather, he places it on a lampstand so that those who enter may see the light.
- 17 For there is nothing hidden that will not become visible, and nothing secret that will not be known and come to light.
- 18 Take care, then, how you hear. To anyone who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he seems to have will be taken away."

Overview from JBC:

These verses are an additional parable, the parable of the lamp (cf. Mark 4:21-22). Luke envisages a Hellenistic house with an entrance from which the light would shine on those with an entrance from which the light would shine on those entering it; in Matthew the lamp gives light rather to all who are in the house. In either case the application is clear; for Luke, the lamp is to shed its light on the Gentiles who are “entering” the kingdom.

Verse 16:

A detached parable that stood in Q as well as in Mark, and whose original application cannot be recovered. Matthew’s version is in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:15), where it exhorts the disciples not to hide their light. Luke uses the parable a second time in 11:33. There it seems to assert that Jesus himself is an answer to the demand for a “sign.” In both instances Luke’s form is based on Q, but in this verse

“or put it under a bed” has been added from Mark, and the “lamp,” as in Mark, appears to be a metaphor for the teaching of Jesus. “Vessel” is used instead of Mark’s “bushel”--a grain and flour measure holding a peck. Matthew’s form of the parable presupposes a lamp that illuminated a one-room Palestinian house. Luke thinks of “a lamp” that had been placed on a “stand in the vestibule of a Greco-Roman dwelling “so that those who enter may see the light. Is this final clause in Luke an oblique reference to Gentile converts?

Verse 17:

This is another floating saying of Jesus. Matthew used a slightly different Q version in Matthew 10:26b, where the proverb is appended to the counsel not to be afraid of persecutors, and gets its meaning from the verse that follows: “What I tell you in the dark, utter in the light.” “Be known and “ is from Q. The saying, as in Mark, seems to be related to the explanation of the purpose of parables in verse 10. The meaning of Jesus’ teaching is “hid” only temporarily; ultimately it will be “made manifest.” Luke uses the proverb again (in its Q form) in 12:2, where it refers to the hypocrisy of the Pharisees.

(IB)

Verse 17:

Most likely this verse represents a separate saying of Jesus which has been attached to the foregoing parable by free association. (JBC)

Verse 18:

[anyone who has](#) -- a willing reception to the word of God brings with it a receptivity for still more, and less of a chance of failing to recognize it in the future.

(JBC)

“how you hear” instead of Mark’s “what you hear.” “Even what he thinks that he has” for Mark’s paradoxical “even what he has.” In both Mark and Luke the proverb means: God will impart more truth to him who appropriates what he has already heard. The saying is also appended to the parable of pounds (Matthew 25:29 and Luke 19:26), where it follows the command that money that had been entrusted to the third servant should be taken from him and given to the first. (IB)

Session 17

PARABLES SPOKEN TO THE DISCIPLES

(1) THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

Mark 4:10-12

Matthew 13:10-15

Luke 8:9-10

1. Read Mark 4:10-20 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference
2. Read Mark 4:10-11
(1) No reference
3. Read Mark 4:12
(1) Isaiah 6:9
(2) John 12:40
(3) Acts 28:26
(4) Romans 11:8

Mark 4:10-12

- 10 And when he was alone, those present along with the Twelve questioned him about the parables.
- 11 He answered them, "The mystery of the kingdom of God has been granted to you. But to those outside everything comes in parables,
- 12 so that 'they may look and see but not perceive, and hear and listen but not understand, in order that they may not be converted and be forgiven.'"

Overview from JBC:

Mark has inserted these verses between the parable and its interpretation. It has been contended that this saying was created by the early church to answer the question: "Why did Jesus fail to win the Jews to Christ?" However, others regard it as an authentic saying of Jesus on the basis of its highly Semitic character. Moreover, the quotation of Isaiah 6:9-10 in verse 10 follows neither the MT nor the LXX, but is an Aram translation then in use. The saying may be an authentic saying of Jesus that has been isolated from its primitive use and attracted to this context by the catchword "parable."

Verse 10:

when he was alone, those present along with the Twelve -- This is a cumbersome phrase to designate "the disciples" (thus Matthew 13:10; Luke 8:9; cf. Mark 10:10) or possibly "those about him who belonged to the company of Twelve." (JBC)

"Those who were about him with the twelve" is understood by both Matthew and Luke as the "disciples," presumably a somewhat larger group than the twelve, perhaps suggesting the later church. It is quite possible that verses 10, 13-20 formed a first explanatory insert into the collection of parables, perhaps the work of some early Christian homilist, and that verses 11-12 form Mark's own peculiar contribution, with its

strange and contradictory theory of Jesus' whole method of teaching by parables. At least, verse 13 seems to attach quite naturally to verse 10. (IB)

There are many textual variants in these verses: some manuscripts read simply "the twelve asked him"; some read "about the parable" (singular, which is a very probably reading); some read "to know the mysteries [plural] of the kingdom of God"; some read "spoken [rather than "done"] in parables." But the chief problem for us lies in the apparent meaning of verse 12, which has no variants. It is true that Matthew has the saying in a somewhat different form, which can be translated "because seeing what they do not see"; it is also true that the original Greek has lost much of its purposive force, and could translate it as "the parables are for those who are outside; those "who indeed see, but without perceiving." But taking this passage as it stands now in Mark, it must be interpreted as an expression of Mark's theory of the parables, a theory derived partly from early Christian experience in evangelism and partly from the ironic oracle in Isaiah 6:9-10, where the prophet looks back upon his own frustrated ministry and views it as the result of divine intervention--the theory that Jesus taught in parables, rather than in plain, straightforward speech, in order to withhold the truth from "those outside," who do not share "the secret of the kingdom of God." It was not an act of judgment in the sense of John's Gospel, as some have interpreted it, but of abandonment, with judgment still to come. It was not an act of selection, as a result of those with attentive ears would hear and respond, but not others; it was rather a secret conveyance of truth to those--and those only--who were already in possession of the secret. Such concepts of obscure revelation were common in the Greco-Roman world of the first century; what Mark has done is to apply such a principle to Jesus' teaching by parables. But the principle will not apply; Jesus' teaching was not obscure, and he was no Gnostic mystagogue. Quite patently his parables were a device to aid his hearer's understanding, not to prevent it, and the theory breaks down at once. Not only is it contradicted by the tradition itself, or the source (see verses 21-22, 33), but the explanation in verses 13-20 is not the exposition of any dark mystery; instead, it is a plain, simple piece of homiletically exegesis, and treats the parable as an allegory of responsive and unresponsive hearers of "the word." There may well have been some of Jesus' hearers who found his parables mysterious and hard to understand, but Mark's theory can only be described as perverse. (IB)

Verse 11:

[to you ... to those outside](#) -- The latter may originally have designated those mentioned in 3:32. Viewed against the rest of Mark, however, the expression presupposes the division between the Jews who by their rejection of Christ have forfeited their privileges, and the new community that replaces the old Israel (cf. Mark 12:9). In the midst of a stubborn Israel, Jesus gathers a new community destined to receive the secret of God's kingdom. (JBC)

[has been given](#) -- God has given. The communication of this secret takes the form of an explanation of what they do not understand; see 4:14. (JBC)

[The mystery of the kingdom of God](#) -- Or, "the secret of God's kingdom." Matthew and Luke have the plural "mysteries", "the secrets," probably more original than Mark's singular (cf. Daniel 2:28). (JBC)

The content of the "secrets" may be determined first, from the parallels in the writings that were not included in the canonical Bible and in the Dead Sea Scrolls where

the word refers to divine providence and its workings in reference to man's salvation. More specifically the word is used there with the connotation that "evil can impede good in the world ... until God's judgment." This connotation is present in Jesus' references to the rocky ground and the briars that impede the fruitfulness of the seed. Thus it is no novelty to Hebrew thought that the varied success of God's kingdom on earth is seen as a divine mystery. Within Mark the content of the secret may be farther determined by those passages where the disciples show a lack of understanding in the face of what Jesus reveals of himself (4:13-20, 36-41; 6:45-52; 7:14-15; 8:14-21; 9:31-32; 10:2-12; 13:3). Thus the mysteries in the knowledge of God's kingdom has come with Jesus, the hidden Messiah,, along with the reversal of values that his coming effects. (JBC)

everything comes in parables -- Or, "everything is in parables." Since parable can mean also "riddle," symbol," and so forth, and since Jesus speaks of "everything" being a parable, some commentators believe that Jesus' saying was not originally concerned with the purpose of parables alone but with the effect of his ministry in general: "To those outside everything becomes a riddle." The Evangelist understood "parable" in the more restricted sense of "a parable." (JBC)

Verse 12:

so that -- since the words following this conjunction are a free quotation of Isaiah 6:9-10, it is reasonable to fill out Mark's thought thus: "in order that [as it is written] they might see ..." Thus, Jesus would not have used parables with the intention of withholding the truth from outsiders. On the other hand, it is quite possible that Mark is giving an accurate picture of Jesus' teaching here, for it was a traditional idea that God withheld his revelation from sinners (Numbers 12:8). Moreover, two-thirds of the Synoptic parallels (41 out of 63) are explained by Jesus, but rarely to non-disciples; those that are explained to them deal with the heart of the Gospel message, God's kingdom. Hence it is difficult to ascribe this parable theory only to the Evangelist. One scholar argues that the original Aram would have meant "unless they turn." This would tone down the severity of the statement, but it is questionable whether the Greek word can be so understood. (JBC)

Summary from LToJC:

Now Jesus was once again alone with his disciples "in the house" in Capernaum. Many new and deeper thoughts of the Kingdom had come to them. But why had he spoken to the multitude, in a manner so different, as regarded not only their form, but even the substance of his teaching? And did they quite understand it solemn meaning to themselves? More especially, who was the enemy whose activity would threaten the safety of the harvest? Concerning that harvest, they had already heard on the way through Samaria. And what were those "weeds" which were to continue in their midst until the judicial separation of the end? To these questions Jesus now made answer. His statement for the adopting in the present instance the parabolic mode of teaching would, at the same time, give them further insight into those very mysteries of the Kingdom which it had been the object of these parables to set forth. His unsolicited explanation of the details of the first parable would call attention to points that might readily have escaped their notice, for which, for warning and instruction, it was most appropriate that they keep in view.

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4. Read Matthew 13:10-15 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference
5. Read Matthew 13:10-11
(1) No reference
6. Read Matthew 13:12
(1) Matthew 25:29 (3) Luke 8:18
(2) Mark 4:25 (4) Luke 19:26
7. Read Matthew 13:13
(1) John 9:39
8. Read Matthew 13:14-15
(1) Isaiah 6:9-10 (3) Acts 28:26-27
(2) John 12:40 (4) Romans 11:8

Matthew 13:10-15

- 10 The disciples approached him and said, "Why do you speak to them in parables?"
- 11 He said to them in reply, "Because knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven has been granted to you, but to them it has not been granted.
- 12 To anyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; from anyone who has not, even what he has will be taken away.
- 13 This is why I speak to them in parables, because 'they look but do not see and hear but do not listen or understand.'
- 14 Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in them, which says: 'You shall indeed hear but not understand you shall indeed look but never see.
- 15 Gross is the heart of this people, they will hardly hear with their ears, they have closed their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and be converted, and I heal them.'

Overview from JBC:

Matthew omits Mark's notice that this explanation was given when Jesus was alone with the disciples; but the character of the explanation remains the same. The reason for parables as given in Matthew seems extremely harsh, and in both Matthew and Luke it is softened--in Matthew by altering the syntax and expanding the passage, in Luke by reducing the passage so sharply that it becomes nearly incomprehensible.

Overview from IB:

Matthew apparently derives verses 10-13 from Mark and verses 16-17 from Q. There are also contacts between verses 10-11 and Luke 8:9-10. Did these verses stand in Q or has Matthew's text influenced that of Luke? In verse 2 Jesus was teaching from the boat; Matthew here ignores this.

Verse 11:

An implicit difference between the general patterns of Mark and Matthew is

pertinent here: in Mark the disciples are represented as not understanding the preaching of Jesus until the final moment, whereas this theme of obtuseness is much less perceptible. That knowledge is “given” to the disciples and withheld from “them” (Mark has “those outside”), but the omission seems not to alter the meaning) is due to a refusal to give, but to a refusal to receive. (JBC)

This cannot have been the original reason for speaking in parables, for a parable is designed to illustrate the truth and make it clear. But Mark and the other evangelists frequently found it hard to understand Jesus’ figures because the context was lost, and they were also baffled by the fact that Jesus had been rejected; hence Mark adopted the theory that the parables were obscure teachings. (IB)

Verse 12:

anyone who has, more will be given -- Matthew expands the saying by transferring Mark 4:25 to this point: he who has (= receives) the reign shall receive more; he who has not (= refuses) the reign shall lose what he has (for the Jews, their position as the chosen people who have received the revelation of God). (JBC)

This verse is in a different context in Mark 4:25, but the context of both evangelists shows that they took it to have the meaning of Proverbs 9:7-9: the spiritually receptive will get more and more, while others will become more stupid. The saying may originally have been a secular proverb: “The rich get richer and the poor get poorer.” If Jesus used it in connection with the saying in Mark 4:24b (= Luke 6:38b), he may have meant: “The more generous you are [in almsgiving and teaching], the more you will ultimately possess.” (IB)

Verse 13:

they look but do not see -- Or, “because seeing they do not see.” The harshness of Mark 4:12 is due to the use of a Greek participle expressing purpose; this reflects an ambiguity implicit in Hebrew and Aramaic, which do not distinguish grammatically between purpose and result. Indeed, biblical writers could scarcely conceive of a divine purpose that did not achieve its result, nor the result of a divine action that was not from a purpose. (JBC)

As Matthew makes clear in verses 14-15, the verses refer to Isaiah 6:9-10. Isaiah does not necessarily think it is God’s will that the people should be unreceptive. His bitterly ironical words are for the purpose of shocking his hearers into understanding. But the gospel writers took this as an expression of God’s purpose, and John 12:37-41 also quotes the passage. Paul has a similar thought in Romans 9:6-33. Some think that in Mark 4:11 Jesus’ original saying has been misunderstood; he intended to say, “To them [the outsiders] everything becomes riddles.” (IB)

Verse 14:

The formulation of Mark 4:12 is based on Isaiah 6:9-10; Matthew again eases the harshness by quoting the text in full in a “fulfillment” formula; see 1:22. This is the longest explicit quotation in Matthew, and it follows the LXX exactly except for one word; some interpreters believe that it is an extremely early expansion of the Gospel. Obscurity cannot be entirely removed here; the basic problem is the problem of obduracy, which ultimately has no perfectly rational explanation. In the biblical conception denial of faith becomes itself the punishment of denial of faith. In Matthew the saying fits its general pattern of the growing hostility of the Pharisees to Jesus; in a sense they have

already reached the peak of unbelief in the Beelzebul controversy (12:25-37) and have closed their eyes and ears to any communication. The ultimate problem in the passage is not the meaning and the purpose of the parables, but the problem of the refusal of the Jews to accept their Messiah. For this reason most commentators think the saying has its original context in none of the Gospels. (JBC)

Verses 14-15:

The quotation is almost verbatim from the standard LXX text of Isaiah 6:9-10 and therefore is not a part of Jesus' original words. (IB)

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9. Read Luke 8:9-10 entirely through one time.
(1) Matthew 13:10-13 (2) Mark 4:10-12
10. Read Luke 8:9
(1) No reference
11. Read Luke 8:10
(1) Isaiah 6:9

Luke 8:9-10

- 9 Then his disciples asked him what the meaning of this parable might be.
- 10 He answered, "Knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God has been granted to you; but to the rest, they are made known through parables so that 'they may look but not see, and hear but not understand.'

Overview from JBC:

Luke has softened and shortened these verses from Mark. The Marcan "to those outside" becomes "to the rest". Luke completely omits the clause, "lest they turn and be forgiven." A parable would so present the truth that the ill-disposed would be more puzzled than enlightened (yet, this too would be a grace). The parable kept the kingdom continually before the attention of the sincere Israelites.

Overview from IB:

In Luke the "disciples" ask Jesus the meaning of "this parable," in Mark, the purpose of "parables" in general. Despite this change Luke also presents the answer in two parts. These verses tell us that Jesus employed "parables" to veil the truth, to hide it from all but his most intimate followers, to confirm the mass of the people in ignorance and unbelief. This is an incredible theory, for the obvious purpose of parables was to make truth plain. In Mark's Gospel the verse breaks a good connection between Mark 4:10 and 13 and are presumably the composition of the evangelist. As he reflected on Jesus' ministry, Mark tried to account for the fact that most of his contemporaries had remained unresponsive. He felt that the failure of the Jews to understand must have been divinely ordained -- cf. Paul's doctrine of God's "hardening" of Israel (Romans 9 - 11). Jesus must have intended the very simplicity of the parables to hide their message from all but the inner circle. In reaching this conclusion Mark may have been influenced by the Hellenistic notion that the essence of religion is a "mystery" ("mysteries" in Luke),

hidden from outsiders but revealed to the initiate. The word occurs nowhere else in the gospel tradition.

Verse 10:

mysteries -- Mark has the singular “mystery”, which refers to the single secret of the coming of the kingdom (4:11), but both Luke and Matthew use the plural, expressive of the many secrets of the nature of the kingdom. (JBC)

they may look but not see -- The clause expresses the result of preaching in parables, not its purpose. (JBC)

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(2) THE USE OF PARABLES

Matthew 13:34-35

12. Read Matthew 13:34-35 entirely through one time.

(1) Mark 4:33-34

13. Read Matthew 13:34

(1) No reference

14. Read Matthew 13:35

(1) Psalm 78:2

Matthew 13:34-35

34 All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables. He spoke to them only in parables,

35 to fulfill what had been said through the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will announce what has lain hidden from the foundation (of the world)."

From JBC:

In Mark these lines are the conclusion to the collection of parables; Matthew follows the order of Mark (4:33-34), even though he adds other parables. He omits Mark's allusions to the inability of the crowds to understand and to the explanation given privately to the disciples. This agrees with his treatment of Mark 4:10-12. The parables are a form of revelation, not of concealment. The point is further expanded by a fulfillment quotation. The text quoted is called the words of a prophet, although the source is Psalm 78:2; David is called a prophet in Acts 2:30. The text follows neither the MT nor the LXX; it is freely adapted to fit the revelation of Jesus.

From IB:

At this point Mark rounded off the parables with a brief editorial section. Matthew abbreviates this and adds a quotation from Psalm 78:2 to show that Jesus' way of teaching had long ago been foreshadowed or foretold. It may have been almost literally true that "He said nothing to them without a parable." The quotation is apparently from

the Hebrew.

* * * * *

(3) EXPLANATION OF THE SOWER

Luke 8:11-15

Matthew 13:18-23

Mark 4:13-20

15. Read Luke 8:11-15 entirely through one time.

(1) No reference

16. Read Luke 8:11

(1) I Peter 1:23

17. Read Luke 8:21-15

(1) No reference

Luke 8:11-15

11 "This is the meaning of the parable. The seed is the word of God.

12 Those on the path are the ones who have heard, but the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts that they may not believe and be saved.

13 Those on rocky ground are the ones who, when they hear, receive the word with joy, but they have no root; they believe only for a time and fall away in time of trial.

14 As for the seed that fell among thorns, they are the ones who have heard, but as they go along, they are choked by the anxieties and riches and pleasures of life, and they fail to produce mature fruit.

15 But as for the seed that fell on rich soil, they are the ones who, when they have heard the word, embrace it with a generous and good heart, and bear fruit through perseverance.

From JBC:

This is an explanation of the parable Jesus once uttered, an explanation that developed in the early church; here in Luke it is simply appended to the preceding saying about parables.

From IB:

The "explanation" reflects missionary problems of the early church. Some who hear the gospel never have faith because of the machinations of the devil; others give up their faith under trial; and still others have their faith submerged by "the cares and pleasures" of this life. The emphasis in the parable is on the abundant harvest from fertile soil; in the "explanation," on the reasons why so much seed is wasted. Allegory, a Hellenistic device for imparting truth, was rarely employed by the rabbis and probably never used by Jesus.

Verse 11:

The seed is the word of God -- that is, the Gospel or the Christian preaching of salvation proposed to men. (JBC)

The sower is not allegorized. "The word of God" in the NT is the technical name for "the gospel." (IB)

Verse 12:

the devil -- The comparison of the devil with birds that gobble up the seed on the footpath may be inspired by a passage in Jubilee (11:11): "Mastema [another name for Satan] sent ravens and birds to devour the seed which was sown in the Land ... Before they could plow in the seed the ravens picked [it] from the surface of the ground." The reaction to the word of God symbolized here is defection. (JBC)

To make sense the four classes of hearers ought to be identified with the four kinds of soil in which the same seed is sown, but they appear to be identified with the seed. The narrator may be thinking in terms of the final crop, which is a product of both seed and soil, or the confusion may be a matter of careless diction. "That they may not believe and be saved" is a Lukan addition which relates the situation more explicitly to the difficulties of the early Christian mission. (IB)

Verse 13:

in time of trial -- Weakness in persecution is indicated. (JBC)

Luke's use of "root" shows his dependence on Mark, for he had used "moisture" in his own version of the parable (verse 6). "Fall away" is a proper synonym for Mark's "are offended." (IB)

Verse 14:

choked by the anxieties -- Double-mindedness. (JBC)

"Pleasures of life", for Mark's "desire for other things," "and their fruit do not mature", for Mark's "and it proves unfruitful." (IB)

Verse 15:

the seed that fell on rich soil -- This seed corresponds to those who persevere and adjust to the problems of faith. (JBC)

As in verse 8 Luke does not distinguish between the various yields of the fertile soil. Those who hear "the word" do so with "an honest and good heart" and bear fruit "with patience." (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

Jesus' unexplained solicitation of the explanation of the details of the first parable called attention to the points that might readily have escaped the disciples' notice, but which, for warning and instruction, it called them to keep in view. The understanding of the first parable seems to have shown them, how much hidden meaning this teaching conveyed, and to have stimulated their desire for comprehending what the presence and machinations of the hostile Pharisees might, in some measure, lead them to perceive in dim outline. Yet it was not to the Pharisees that the Lord referred. The enemy was the Devil; the field, the world; the good seed, the children of the Kingdom; the weeds, the children of the Wicked One. And most markedly did the Lord, in this instance, not explain the parable of the Weeds, as the first one, in its details, but only indicate, so to speak, the stepping-stones for its understanding. This not only to train the disciples, but because--unlike the first parable--that of the Weeds would only in the future and increasingly unfold its meaning.

Even this was not all. The disciples had now knowledge concerning the mysteries of the Kingdom. But that Kingdom was not a matter of understanding only, but of personal apprehension. This implied discovery of its value, personal acquisition of it, and surrender of all to its possession. And this mystery of the Kingdom was next conveyed to the disciples in those parables especially addressed to, and suited only for them.

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18. Read Matthew 13:18-23 entirely through one time.
(1) Mark 4:13-20 (2) Luke 8:11-15

Matthew 13:18-23

- 18 "Hear then the parable of the sower.
19 The seed sown on the path is the one who hears the word of the kingdom without understanding it, and the evil one comes and steals away what was sown in his heart.
20 The seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the word and receives it at once with joy.
21 But he has no root and lasts only for a time. When some tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, he immediately falls away.
22 The seed sown among thorns is the one who hears the word, but then worldly anxiety and the lure of riches choke the word and it bears no fruit.
23 But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold."

Overview from JBC:

This passage is now generally regarded by commentators as the interpretation given the parable by the primitive Christian community. We may thus call it a second level of interpretation; the first level is of a more general character. The second level proceeds by allegorizing. The terms of the allegory reflect the conditions of the primitive church rather than the proclamation of the reign of Jesus, and this so clearly that there is little room for doubt that the church is interpreting the parable. This interpretation does not annihilate the first level of interpretation but rather builds upon it. The soil represents various types of members of the church, those who have heard the Gospel and accepted it with faith. But the faith is not always persevering.

Overview from IB:

Allegory was a Greek method of interpreting sacred texts, Philo (the Alexandrian Jewish philosopher) employed it, and so did many teachers of the later Christian church. But rabbis used it sparingly, and almost never to interpret a parable. This interpretation contains a number of technical terms--such as "word," meaning "the Christian message"--which are not found elsewhere in the Synoptic Gospels; it also changes the parable into an allegory of different kinds of soil. The curious language shows that the writer is forcing the interpretation; for example, in verse 23, "what was sown on good soil" should be "the word" (verse 8), but it is here identified strangely with the one "who hears the word."

Verse 18:

Matthew softens Mark 4:13, which includes the disciples among those who do not understand the parables. (JBC)

Verse 19:

the word of the kingdom -- This is the seed. (JBC)

without understanding it -- This is a phrase peculiar to Matthew; this does not signify intellectual apprehension, but the full acceptance of the Gospel. (JBC)

the evil one -- He “easily” snatches the word. (JBC)

Verse 20:

hears the word and receives it at once with joy -- This is synonymous with “understand” in verse 19. This second class are “opportunists” who cannot meet the challenge of suffering and persecution. (JBC)

Verses 21-22:

Mark and Matthew lived at a time “when tribulation or persecution” had arisen “on account of the word” (that is, the Christian gospel) and when many Christians were immersed in the “cares of the world and the delight in riches.” The combination of these two elements fits the period after 70 A.D. Similar comparisons are found in Ecclesiasticus 23:25 and Wisdom 4:3. (IB)

Verse 22:

worldly anxiety -- Or, “the cares of the world.” The third class also hears and accepts, but is distracted by secular interests. (JBC)

Verse 23:

The fourth class hears, understands, and performs. Each of the classes illustrates the saying of Jesus in the Gospels about the word of the Gospel; the interpretation is not original but is a synthesis of Gospel material. It is not without interest that the primitive community was able so early to classify its delinquent members. Matthew’s revision of Mark is quite extensive in this passage, but the revisions are intended for clarity rather than for any alteration of the sense. The abbreviations are few, in contrast to Luke, which abbreviates the passage much more sharply. (JBC)

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19 Read Mark 4:13-20 entirely through one time.

(1) Matthew 13:18-23

(2) Luke 8:11-15

20. Read Mark 4:14-20

(1) No reference

Mark 4:13-20

13 Jesus said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand any of the parables?

14 The sower sows the word.

15 These are the ones on the path where the word is sown. As soon as they hear, Satan comes at once and takes away the word sown in them.

16 And these are the ones sown on rocky ground who, when they hear the word, receive it at once with joy.

17 But they have no root; they last only for a time. Then when tribulation or

- persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.
- 18 Those sown among thorns are another sort. They are the people who hear the word,
- 19 but worldly anxiety, the lure of riches, and the craving for other things intrude and choke the word, and it bears no fruit.
- 20 But those sown on rich soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit thirty and sixty and a hundredfold."

Overview from JBC:

Both the un-Hebraic style and vocabulary and the allegorical features of this passage suggest that it is an interpretation of the primitive church rather than of Jesus. More significantly, it bypasses the main eschatological point of Jesus' parable and, by concentrating on the different types of unfruitful soil, draws a moralistic lesson of perseverance in temptation and persecution. "The word," which appears eight times in these verses, is a Christian term for the Gospel message (Acts 6:7; 12:24; Colossians 1:6, 10; I Thessalonians 1:6; I Timothy 1:8; I Peter 2:8; James 1:21).

Verse 13:

"All the parables": As elsewhere in Mark (for example, 8:21), Jesus reprimands the disciples for their obtuseness. If they cannot grasp the meaning of this parable, how will they understand the other parables? The question is more appropriate if addressed to later students of Jesus' collected parables than to the disciples when the present parable was first spoken. (IB)

Verses 14-20:

The conditions reflected ("affliction and persecution" in verse 17) seem to be those of the early church; cf. 10:29-31. This would be entirely natural if the explanation came from either Mark himself or some preacher or teacher in the church who handed down the collection of parables in this chapter. (IB)

Verse 20:

bear fruit -- The presence of this theme suggests a setting of baptismal instruction as the origin of this passage (cf. Matthew 3:7-12; 13:3-8, 18-23; Romans 6:21-22; 7:4-6; Galatians 5:22-24; Philippians 1:11; Ephesians 5:8-11; Colossians 1:10-13). (JBC)

(4) EXPLANATION OF THE WEEDS

Matthew 13:36-43

21. Read Matthew 13:36-43 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference
22. Read Matthew 13:36-41
(1) No reference
23. Read Matthew 13:42
(1) Matthew 8:12 (2) Revelation 21:8

24. Read Matthew 13:43
(1) Daniel 12:3

Matthew 13:36-43

- 36 Then, dismissing the crowds, he went into the house. His disciples approached him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."
37 He said in reply, "He who sows good seed is the Son of Man,
38 the field is the world, the good seed the children of the kingdom. The weeds are the children of the evil one,
39 and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.
40 Just as weeds are collected and burned (up) with fire, so will it be at the end of the age.
41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all who cause others to sin and all evildoers.
42 They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.
43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears ought to hear.

Overview from JBC:

The explanation is entirely allegorical; but even with the explanation the parable and the allegory raise questions. It has been noticed above that the form of the parable is such that it suits the allegorical explanation; and thus it seems likely that the parable is either composed by Matthew or his sources or it is a substantial reworking of a parable of Jesus.

Verse 36:

"Then he left the crowds"--The interpretation is addressed to "his disciples;" so are the parables which follow. (IB)

Verse 37:

"Son of Man" in the apocalyptic sense. (IB)

Verse 38:

the field is the world -- The scandals and the workers of lawlessness are collected from "the kingdom of the Son of Man." This must mean the church. The problem is not the existence of the wicked in the world at large, but the existence of wicked men where the Son of Man has sown good men; the seed is the members of the church, not the word. (JBC)

For Matthew and his church the missionary "field" is the entire "world" (as in 28:19). A few Jewish parables compare the world to a garden. "Sons of the evil one" is the harsh judgment passed on the Jews in John 8:41, 44. Does Matthew perhaps believe that some people are inherently evil?" (IB)

Verse 39:

The solution to the problem is purely eschatological. The angels are the ministers of judgment. The church has come to recognize that it is not entirely a community of the elect; it has unfaithful members. God will tolerate such members in the church as he

tolerates them in the world at large; but the judgment will determine the final destiny of righteous and wicked and will purify the kingdom entirely. The lesson is certainly one of patient tolerance of the presence of the wicked even in the community of the reign. (JBC)

“the end of the age” is a favorite phrase of Matthew’s; in fact these are the last words in the Gospel (28:20). The Hebrew word can mean “world” or “age.” Its “end” or consummation is the beginning of the age or world to come. (IB)

Verse 41:

A distinction is drawn between the “kingdom” of the “Son of man”; that is, the church, and the Father’s kingdom (verse 43). Here the “angels” accompany the Son of man, as they accompany God when he comes to judgment in Enoch 1:3-9. Jesus therefore is given the privileges of the Father. Men are spoken of as “scandals” or “causes of sin”, as in 16:23, where some versions have translated the word as “hindrance.” (cf. on 11:6). “Evil-doers”, literally “those who do lawlessness.” The evangelist thinks of sin in terms of breaking the law (I John 3:4). He may, indeed, have in mind Christians who claim to be emancipated from any legal restrictions whatever.

(IB)

Verse 42:

The “furnace of fire” is an apocalyptic figure. “Gnashing of teeth”; cf. on 8:12.

(IB)

Verse 43:

To the explanation is added the phrase, “Let him who has ears hear,” which is elsewhere attached to the parable itself. The explanation is not entirely consistent with itself; possibly it shows more than one level of interpretation. (JBC)

“Then the righteous will shine” is an allusion to Daniel 12:3. (IB)

(5) THE HIDDEN TREASURE AND THE PEARL

Matthew 13:44-46

25. Read Matthew 13:44-46 entirely through one time.

(1) No reference

26. Read Matthew 13:44-45

(1) Proverbs 2:4

(2) Proverbs 4:7

27. Read Matthew 13:46

(1) No reference

Matthew 13:44-46

44 "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls.

46 When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it.

Overview from JBC:

These parables, peculiar to Matthew, have a common theme. Where the other parables speak of the reign and of its members as a group, these parables are addressed to the individual person. In both, the man sells all he has (see 19:21). The reign demands total renunciation (6:24; 8:18-22; 10:37-39). Here the emphasis is less on the renunciation than on the supreme value of the reign; renunciation has its reward. Small hoards of coins and jewelry are still found occasionally in Palestine both by chance and by archaeological exploration. In the unsettled ancient world where the danger of foreign invasion or brigandage was almost always present, many a householder buried his little store in the hope of a return, which he never made. The finder of the treasure does not tell the owner of the field; Jesus passes no judgment on the ethics of the finder, but uses his avarice as an example of the zeal with which the believer should pursue the reign at any price. The pearl merchant similarly puts all his possessions in one investment that he knows will repay him handsomely.

Verse 44:

“Treasure hid in a field”, always captures the imagination. Peasants in the Near East still occasionally find hoards of coins. It may be poor ethics to conceal the value of such a field, but, as in the parable of the unjust steward (Luke 16:1-8), the man’s character has nothing to do with the point of the parable. The kingdom of God is so desirable that out of sheer “joy” a man will sell all his worldly possessions to have it and count that he has made no sacrifice whatever (cf. 19:29). (IB)

Verses 45-46:

The companion piece, the parable of the pearl of great price, has exactly the same point. Here, however, the pearl is found only after long search. And, whereas one might spend part of the treasure, all that the merchant has is the pearl. Nevertheless he is satisfied. “A merchant in search of fine pearls” might travel as far as the Persian Gulf or India. Pearls were an article of commerce at that time (Revelation 18:12). (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

Rather closely connected are the two parables of the treasure hid in the field and of the pearl of great price which are now spoken to the disciples. Their differences are sufficiently marked. In the first, one must probably be regarded as intending to buy a, if not his, field, and discovers a treasure hidden there, and in his joy parts with all else to become owner of the field and of the hidden treasure which he had so unexpectedly found. Some difficulty has been expressed in regard to the morality of such a transaction. In reply it may be observed, that it was in entire accordance with Jewish law. If a man had found a treasure in loose coins among the barley, it would certainly be his, if he bought the barley. If he had found it on the ground, or in the soil, it would equally certainly belong to him, if he could claim ownership of the soil, and right to it. The law went so far as to adjudge to the purchaser of fruits anything found among these fruits. This will suffice to vindicate a question of detail, which in any case, should not be too closely pressed in parabolic history.

In the second parable we have a wise merchantman who travels in search of pearls, and when he finds one which in value exceeds all else, he returns and sells all that he has in order to buy this unique gem. The supreme value of the kingdom, the consequent desire to appropriate it, and the necessity of parting with all else for this purpose, are the points common to this and the previous parable. In the one case, it is

marked that this treasure is hid from common view in the field, and the finder makes unexpected discovery of it, which fills him with joy. In the other case, the merchant is indeed in search of pearls, but he has the wisdom to discover the transcendent value of this one gem, and yet greater wisdom to give up all further search, and to acquire it at the surrender of everything else. Thus, two different aspects of the kingdom, and two different conditions on the part of those who, for its sake, equally part with all, are here set before the disciples.

(6) PARABLE OF THE NET

Matthew 13:47-50

28. Read Matthew 13:47-50 entirely through one time.

(1) No reference

Matthew 13:47-50

- 47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind.
- 48 When it is full they haul it ashore and sit down to put what is good into buckets. What is bad they throw away.
- 49 Thus it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous
- 50 and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.

Overview from JBC:

This parable, also peculiar to Matthew, is very close to the parable of the weeds (verses 24-30, 36-43). The theme of the presence of both good and wicked in the church is even clearer here, and the eschatological solution is identical. In this parable, however, it is possible to trace an earlier form of the parable beneath the allegorizing second level of interpretation. The introductory verse makes no mention of good or wicked, but states simply “from every kind.” The reign is thus described as universal in its scope and excluding no one. The net is the large dragnet. The eschatological line in 50a is repeated from 42a.

Verse 47:

This “net” is the seine, and is not the same as that of 4:18. One end can be fastened to shore and the other to a boat, or two boats may work it. One who has seen such a net come to shore will observe that it gathers “fish of every kind.” This is probably the point of the parable. The kingdom draws into itself people of very different motives, attitudes, cultures, and moral attainments, and those who spread its net dare not draw too many distinctions (cf. verse 30). Jesus, unlike the Pharisees of his time, had not interest in forming a pure church composed only of the perfect. God, in his good time, will judge; it is the privilege of Jesus and his followers to offer salvation and forgiveness. (IB)

Verse 48:

“The bad” are fish that do not have scales or fins (Leviticus 11:9-12), and so are

prohibited to Jews. (IB)

Verses 49-50:

The interpretation of the parable of the net is very similar to verses 41-42. Verse 50 is a kind of refrain. (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

It would be understood more and more by the disciples that mere inclusion in the group of Jesus' followers was not sufficient. The net let down into the sea of this world would include much which, when the net was at last drawn to shore, would prove worthless or even hurtful. To be a disciple was not enough. Even here there would be separation. Nor only the weeds, which the enemy had designedly sown into the midst of the barley, but even much of the net, which had been cast into the sea and had enclosed would, when brought to land, prove fit only to be cast away, into the "oven of the fire where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth.

(7) PARABLE OF THE HOUSEHOLDER

Matthew 13:51-53

29. Read Matthew 13:51-53 entirely through one time.

(1) No reference

Matthew 13:51-53

51 "Do you understand all these things?" They answered, "Yes."

52 And he replied, "Then every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old."

53 When Jesus finished these parables, he went away from there.

Overview from JBC:

Matthew has already used Mark's concluding formula (13:34-35), but he has placed these verses, peculiar to himself, at the end of his collection.

Verse 51:

Matthew insists that, although the disciples have asked for the interpretation of the parables (verse 36), they have "understood all this." (IB)

Verse 52:

every scribe -- The saying of this verse need have had no reference to the parables in its original context. The question in verse 51 concerns the "understanding" of the parables; see 13:19, where the same word is added by Matthew. The question may be composed to introduce the saying. There are no references in the NT to Christian scribes; but it has to be assumed that the members of the primitive Christian community included some scribes. Many commentators think that "Matthew" himself was such a Christian scribe. The saying is a restatement in a different form of the principle of the relations of the Law to the Gospel (5:17-20). The scribe who has become a disciple will employ both the old (the Law and the Prophets) and the new (the Gospel). Neither is sufficient without the other; for the Gospel is the fullness of the Law. (JBC)

This is Matthew's ideal for the Christian disciple. He should be a rabbi, but one "trained in the kingdom of heaven." It has been said that the evangelist here furnishes an unconscious portrait of himself. "What is new" is perhaps Jesus' new law; "what is old", the riches of the OT and the rabbinical tradition. (IB)

(8) THE PRIVILEGE OF DISCIPLESHIP

Matthew 13:16-17

30. Read Matthew 13:16-17 entirely through one time.

(1) Luke 10:23-24

(2) I Peter 1:10-12

Matthew 13:16-17

16 "But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear.

17 Amen, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

Overview from JBC:

Luke (10:23-24) places this saying from Q immediately after the thanksgiving of Jesus for the Father's revelation to the simple (see 11:25-27); he thus connects it with the revelation. Matthew's use is not an alteration. He uses the catchwords "see" and "hear" from 13:13 to identify the disciples as those who, unlike the unbelieving Jews, perceive the revelation of the reign.

Overview from IB:

Matthew adds the word "but" to connect these verses with the foregoing. Luke 10:23-24, which is probably closer to Q, praises the disciples, not because they see, but because of what they have been given to see; that is, "the first manifestations of the coming age. Matthew delights in mentioning "righteous men" (as in 10:41; 23:29) and here substitutes the word for Luke's "kings". The saying is another indication that Jesus believed the kingdom to be present (cf. 12:28; Psalms of Solomon 18:7).

Verse 17:

prophets and righteous -- These terms occur together in 10:41 and in 23:29; strangely both in 23:29 and here Luke does not have the same pair. Luke is probably closer to the source, for it is difficult to see why "righteous" should be altered to "kings." (JBC)

Summary from LToJC:

So ended that day of first teaching in parables--to the people by the lake, and in the house in Capernaum to the disciples. Dim, shadowy outlines, growing larger and more faint in their tracings to the people; shadowy outlines, growing brighter and clearer to all who were disciples. Undoubtedly these parables were un-Jewish. This appears, not only from a comparison with the Jewish views of the kingdom, but from the fact that their meaning was unintelligible to the hearers of Jesus, and from this that, rich as Jewish teaching is in parables, none in the least parallel to them can be adduced.

Session 18

1. STILLING OF THE STORM

Matthew 8:18, 23-27

Mark 4:35-41

Luke 8:22-25

1. Read Matthew 8:18, 23-27 in its entirety one time.
(1) No reference
2. Read Matthew 8:18
(1) Mark 4:35
3. Read Matthew 8:23-27
(1) Mark 4:35-40 (2) Luke 8:22-25
4. Read Matthew 8:23-24
(1) No reference
5. Read Matthew 8:25-26
(1) Psalm 107:28-29
6. Read Matthew 8:27
(1) No reference

Matthew 8:18, 23-27

- 18 When Jesus saw a crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side.
.....
- 23 He got into a boat and his disciples followed him.
- 24 Suddenly a violent storm came up on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by waves; but he was asleep.
- 25 They came and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!"
- 26 He said to them, "Why are you terrified, O you of little faith?" Then he got up, rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was great calm.
- 27 The men were amazed and said, "What sort of man is this, whom even the winds and the sea obey?"

Overview from IB:

This is abbreviated from Mark 4:36-41, the preceding verse in Mark, 4:35, already having been copied in verse 18. To ancient Christians it no doubt meant that Jesus could deliver his people out of any storm, literal or figurative (Psalm 65:7; 69:1-2; 18:16-17; 42:7). Yet they also took it as an actual occurrence. Such sudden storms are not unknown on the Sea of Galilee.

Verse 18:

This connecting verse is peculiar to Matthew, which has its own arrangement. Jesus commands a voyage to the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, opposite Capernaum, in order to escape the crowds. Actually the chief reason for the command in Matthew is to provide an occasion to insert the stories of the calming of the storm and the demoniacs of Gadara. The two sayings about discipleship are placed in Luke at the beginning of the journey narrative; they had no original context in Q. Both the speakers are disciples. Matthew presupposes the formation of a group of intimate associates who accompanied Jesus, although he has not yet described the formation of such a group except in the story of the call (4:18-22). (JBC)

Verses 23-27:

In these verses Matthew has compressed the narrative less than usual, and his changes are significant. For Mark's "whirlwind" has become an "earthquake," a cosmic disturbance. In Mark 4:35-41, the boat is shipping water, in Matthew it is nearly covered by the waves. In Mark the cry of the disciples is not a petition for help--how could they expect to be saved from a storm? In Matthew it is a prayer for deliverance addressed to Jesus, the Christ; and this change is not altogether consistent with the rebuke in which they are called "you of little faith." (JBC)

Verse 24:

[a violent storm](#) -- The "earthquake" mentioned above. Modern observers have noticed that the Sea of Galilee, a small body of water almost entirely surrounded by hills, is often subject to sudden storms because of the currents of air of variant temperatures that roll down the slopes. The storms abate as suddenly as they arise. It seems unlikely that the disciples, who had lived on the Sea of Galilee all their lives, did not know this. The story opens another aspect of the mystery of Jesus: his mastery over nature, which is more awesome than his mastery over disease and demons. The disciples simply ask who he is; the rest of the Gospel is taken up with the revelation of the answer to the question. (JBC)

Verse 26:

Here the "faith" is trust in God (Romans 4:20). Matthew omits Mark's words of rebuke, "Silence! Be muzzled!" perhaps because they seem like the binding of a spell. The "great calm" after the storm corresponds to the healing of the demoniac in the next story. (IB)

Verse 27:

[The men](#) -- This word seems to admit others than the disciples as witnesses of the miracle, although he has left no room for others in the preceding narrative; Mark, however, notes that the boat was accompanied by other boats (4:36). (JBC)

7. Read Mark 4:35-41 in its entirety one time.
(1) Matthew 8:18, 23-27 (2) Luke 8:22-25
8. Read Mark 4:35-40
(1) No reference
9. Read Mark 4:41
(1) Mark 1:27

Mark 4:35-41

- 35 On that day, as evening drew on, he said to them, "Let us cross to the other side."
36 Leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat just as he was. And other boats were with him.
37 A violent squall came up and waves were breaking over the boat, so that it was already filling up.
38 Jesus was in the stern, asleep on a cushion. They woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"
39 He woke up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Quiet! Be still!" The wind ceased and there was great calm.
40 Then he asked them, "Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?"
41 They were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this whom even wind and sea obey?"

Overview from JBC:

After the three parables Mark recounts three miracles performed for the benefit of the disciples.

This episode is frequently taken to be based on a personal recollection of Peter. Nevertheless the event has been so reworked in its transmission that it is all but impossible to isolate the brute fact from its credal interpretation in the church. One scholar has isolated the basic text which is an early Christian confession of Jesus' power as a wonder-worker which was then expanded. The mention of the boat in verses 35, 36, 38b, and 45 introduces an ecclesial nuance. The emphasis on the storm and the need of faith (38b, 40) make the incident a lesson in discipleship under stress; and the use of "obey" in verse 41b indicates that Jesus' power is still operative in the Church.

Overview from IB:

Just as the day in Capernaum (1:14-45), the conflict stories or controversies (2:1 - 3:6) and 3:20-30), and the day of parables (4:1-34) contain blocks of homogeneous material, so does the following sections, 4:35 - 5:43 form a unit, a group or series of great miracle stories. The incidents took place about the Sea of Galilee and are connected indeed with a journey across the lake and back. Very probably they formed a group in one of Mark's sources. The stories are different in style or "form" from those already told; the narratives are richer in detail and exhibit an interest in detail for its own sake, while in content they more closely resemble the miracle stories current in the Greco-Roman world of the first century.

Verse 35:

On that day, as evening drew on, -- Or simply, "late in the day." In context this notice may have symbolic meaning. See comment following 5:20. (JBC)

Verses 35-38:

The point of the present story is not any teaching or saying of Jesus, or even his example of faith and courage in the midst of danger, but his power--as Son of God--over the roaring elements. The likeness of this story with that of Jonah in the OT has been noted, and there are other parallels. But such a detail as the "other boats" in verse 36 seems to point to an actual tradition of the event, since no use is made of the "other

boats” in the story. Moreover the caustic query of the disciples in verse 38 does not sound like an invention; the reverence felt at a latter date would have toned it down, just as it is toned down in Matthew and Luke. (IB)

Verse 36:

just as he was -- This editorial touch of Mark links the miracle more closely with the foregoing context (cf. 4:1). (JBC)

Leaving the crowd -- This and the following miracles are performed for the disciples’ benefit. (JBC)

other boats were with him -- Nevertheless there is an indication that originally this miracle interested a larger audience than just the Twelve (cf. also 5:20 and the repeated mention of the crowds in 5:21-43). (JBC)

Verse 37:

the boat -- The boat has often been seen as an image of the church.

Verse 38:

a cushion -- More exactly, the helmsman’s seat on the high afterdeck, where Jesus would have been protected from the splash of the waves. (JBC)

said to him -- What marks this latter part of the verse as an addition to the early creed is that elsewhere in Mark the address “Teacher” always occurs in catechetical passages (9:17, 38; 10:17, 20, 35; 12:14, 19, 32; 13:1), and that the occurrence of such titles in miracle stories is clearly motivated by catechetical interests. (JBC)

Verse 39:

he ... rebuked the wind -- As if it were a demon. See 1:25. (JBC)

said to the sea, "Quiet! Be still!" -- Literally, “be muzzled.” The religious implication of this miracle is seen in its OT background, where God’s work in creation is described as a conquest of the sea or sea dragon (Genesis 1:2; Psalm 89:10; Job 9:8; 26:12-13) and is paralleled by his deliverance of Israel (Psalm 74:12-14; Isaiah 51:9; Exodus 15:8; Isaiah 63:12-13). Here Jesus shows the same divine mastery over the sea in his own redemptive ministry. (JBC)

Verses 39-40:

“Peace! Be still!” is a rather mild translation for the original Greek words, which is probably from a formula of command used for “binding” a demon of storm. But even if Jesus used such a term, he cannot have used it in the magical sense as a formula effective by the mere utterance. “Faith” here means trust in God, reliance upon God for help (cf. 9:23). Jesus is repeatedly represented in Mark as teaching, exercising, and demonstrating such trust in God. (IB)

Verse 40:

"Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?" -- some manuscripts read, “Why do you not have faith?”, which brings out less clearly that is a question of faith in Jesus. The fact that the disciples are not merely “of little faith” (Matthew 8:26), but have no faith, seems inconsistent with a pre-resurrection situation. It looks like the Evangelist’s own comment, and may have been prompted by a reminiscence of the disciples’ loss of faith at Jesus’ death. (JBC)

Verse 41:

even wind and sea obey -- Or “that even wind and sea obey him.” The addition of these words to the disciples’ question in verse 41a is tantamount to an answer: he is God.

This manner of answering one's own question about Jesus is a characteristically catechetical amplification (cf. Mark 1:27; 2:7). The use of "obey" shows this event was recounted not so much as a past historical incident, but as symbolic of Christ's abiding power to rescue his church from tribulation. (JBC)

"They" presumably the disciples, as in Matthew and Luke, although Matthew widens it here to "the men". "...said...What manner of man is this?" Probably better read: "What then is this?", or even "Who can he be?" Mark's answer to the question is certainly implied: Jesus is the supernatural Son of God. There is little prospect of any satisfactory solution of the problem of the "miracle stories" upon a naturalistic basis or by a purely rationalistic method--here, for example, by citing Jesus' courage, mere coincidence, and so on. It is better to leave the stories as they stand, recognizing that whereas miracle stories are now often more of a burden than a support to faith, in the ancient world they possessed value of the evidence. At the same time they were not looked upon as contraventions of a universal system of natural law, and hence were not quite so stupendous to those who experienced or reported them as they would be to us. In fact, granted the possibility of divine intervention in the "constitution and course of nature," miracles were only natural; and hence the center of interest in such stories as this was not really in the miracle, as it would be for us, but in what it proved: the presence, the power, the saving purpose of God. For Mark, no doubt, and for his readers, this miracle story meant that the same divine Lord who had been able to rescue his imperiled disciples in the savage night tempest on the sea was still present with his own, and could preserve them in the midst of danger, persecution, or whatever threats of destruction they encountered while grim terror stalked the streets of Nero's Rome. (IB)

* * * * *

10. Read Luke 8:22-25 in its entirety one time.

(1) Matthew 8:18, 23-27

(2) Mark 4:35-41

Luke 8:22-25

- 22 One day he got into a boat with his disciples and said to them, "Let us cross to the other side of the lake." So they set sail,
- 23 and while they were sailing he fell asleep. A squall blew over the lake, and they were taking in water and were in danger.
- 24 They came and woke him saying, "Master, master, we are perishing!" He awakened, rebuked the wind and the waves, and they subsided and there was a calm.
- 25 Then he asked them, "Where is your faith?" But they were filled with awe and amazed and said to one another, "Who then is this, who commands even the winds and the sea, and they obey him?"

Overview from JBC:

Luke edits out many colorful details found in Mark; perhaps, we can also say that an eyewitness account (Mark) is becoming a "miracle story." Luke removes Mark's phrase, "they took him just as he was [in the boat]," and writes a new introduction. He effectively cuts any close connection with the preceding parables. It is, consequently,

difficult to consider this miracle an example of “the mysteries of the Kingdom of God” (verse 10), which Jesus hides from the crowd but reveals only to his disciples. Luke rephrases some of the details: he states that Jesus fell asleep before the storm swept down upon the lake; he softens the gruff remarks of the disciples (“Is it no concern of yours that we are perishing?”) and even the remark of Jesus (“Is it still possible that you are without faith?”)

Overview from IB:

Nature miracles form a small group in the gospel tradition. It is frequently debated in these cases whether some popular tale has become attached to the person of Jesus, or whether a natural event has been transformed on reflection into a miracle. According to the latter hypothesis, in this instance Jesus’ confident trust in God at a time of crisis calmed his disciples’ fears, and their escape from the perils of the tempest was later ascribed to his miraculous powers. But Mark and Luke understood the incident as an exhibition of the supernatural, and this fact must not be obscured by any process of rationalization.

Verse 22:

[the other side of the lake](#) -- The spot is unspecified. The lake, however, again becomes a setting for the manifestation of power. (JBC)

A vaguer introduction than in Mark, where Jesus had been teaching from a boat that was anchored offshore and then, in the evening of the same day, had begun the voyage with his disciples to “the other side of the lake.” (IB)

Verse 23:

[he fell asleep](#) -- Luke omits the detail in Mark that “it was evening.” There is the further implication that he who will work the miracle is no superman, but one subject to the fatigue of ordinary men. (JBC)

Verses 23-25:

A sudden squall on the Sea of Galilee is said to be a common occurrence. Natural phenomena such as “the wind and the raging winds” are the work of spirits or demons in all ancient folklore--a survival of animism. “Faith” in this instance means trust in the providence of God. The amazement of those who have witnessed a miracle is often stressed by the narrator of the story as confirmatory evidence. (IB)

Verse 24:

[rebuked the wind and the waves](#) -- Or, “rebuked the wind and the surging deep.” The Greek verb used here is usually used for the rebuking of demons; the suggestion is that the surging deep and winds were controlled by demons too (cf. Zechariah 3:2). In the OT the sea was often presented as the abode of such powers (Isaiah 27:1; 51:10; Psalm 89:10-11; Job 9:13). In calming the lake, Jesus appears as the conqueror of the demonic forces of the world of nature; like Yahweh (Psalm 65:7; 89:9; 107:23-29) he is the lord of the winds and the waves. (JBC)

Verse 25:

["Where is your faith?"](#) -- Jesus’ comment goes to the heart of the matter; a disciple of Jesus, faced even with the worst, should draw consolation from his faith and proximity to the Master. (JBC)

[Who then is this](#) -- Or, “Who can this be?” The question that the whole Gospel tries to answer for its readers. (JBC)

Overall Summary from LToJC:

It was the evening of the day of new teaching, and once more great multitudes were gathering to Jesus. What else could he have said to those to whom he had all that morning spoken in parables, which hearing they had not heard nor understood? It was perhaps this, rather than weariness after a long day's working, which led to the resolve to pass to the other side. To merely physical weariness Jesus never subordinated his work. If such had been the motive, the proposal to withdraw for rest would have come from the disciples, while here the Lord himself gave command to pass to the other side. So "they took him even as He was"--that is, probably without refreshment of food, or even preparation of it for the journey. This indicates how readily, even eagerly, the disciples obeyed his command.

Whether in their haste they didn't heed the signs of the coming storm; whether they had the secret feeling, that ship and sea which bore such burden were safe from the tempest, or whether it was one of those storms which so often rise suddenly, and sweep with such fury over the Sea of Galilee, must remain undetermined. He was "in the boat", that well-known boat, which was always ready for his use, whether as a pulpit, resting-place, or means of traveling. But the departure had not been so rapid as to go unobserved; and he boat was attended by other boats, which bore those that were eager to follow him. In the stern of the boat, on the low bench where the steersman sometimes takes a rest, was pillowed the head of Jesus. Weariness, faintness, hunger, exhaustion, asserted their mastery over his true humanity. If apostolic tradition had devised this narrative to exhibit his divine power, why represent him as faint and asleep in the boat; and if it would portray him as deeply sleeping from weariness, how could it ascribe to him the power of stilling the storm by his rebuke? Each of them by themselves, but not the two combined, would be as legends are written. Their coincidence is due to the incidence of truth. It is so evidently undersigned in the structure of the narrative, that every deepest manifestation of his humanity is immediately attended by highest display of his divinity, and each special display of his divine power is followed by some marks of his true humanity. No narrative could be more consistent with the fundamental assumption that he is the God-Man.

The picture is unspeakably sublime. Jesus is asleep, from weariness and hunger, in the stern of the boat. His head is resting on that low wooden bench, while the heavens darken, the wild wind swoops down those mountain-gorges, howling with hungry rage over the trembling sea; the waves rise and toss, and lash and break over the boat, and beat into it, and the white foam washes at his feet. His humanity here appears as true as when he lay cradled in the manger; his divinity, as when the sages from the East laid their offerings at his feet. But the danger is increasing--"so that the boat was now filling." They who watched it might be tempted to regard the peaceful rest of Jesus, not as indicative of divine majesty, or rather sublime consciousness of absolute safety, because they did not yet fully realize who he was. In that case it would rather mean absolute weakness in not being able to overcome the demands of our lower nature, real indifference to their fate, not from want of sympathy, but of power. In short, it might lead up to the inference that the Christ was not who they thought he was, and the kingdom of which he had spoken in parables was not really his in the sense of being identified with his person.

We can partially perceive already the internal connection between the teaching of that day and the miracle of that evening. Both were quite novel: the teaching by parables, and then the help in a parable. Both were founded in the OT: the teaching on its predictions, the miracle on its proclamations of the special divine manifestations in the sea; and both show that everything depended on the view taken of the person of Jesus. Further teaching comes to us from the details of the narrative which follows. Perhaps it was Peter himself who impatiently appealed to Jesus to save them. Perhaps Matthew was also present, and it may have been that Mark (from Peter) and Luke had heard about it from others.

It is not easy to understand what the disciples had really expected when they awakened Jesus with their appeal: "Lord, save us--we perish!" They certainly did not expect that which actually happened, since not only wonder, but fear, came over them as they witnessed it. Probably theirs would be a vague, undefined belief in the unlimited possibility of all in connection with the Christ. A belief of which, as yet only the dim outlines were visible to them. A belief which also accounts for the co-existence, not of unbelief, but of inability of apprehension. It equally characterized that of the disciples up to the resurrection morning, bringing them to the empty tomb, and filling them with unbelieving wonder that the tomb was empty. We have thus come to that stage in this history when, in opposition to the now formulated charge of his enemies as to his person, neither his teaching nor his workings should be fully understood, except so far as his personality was understood--that he was of God and indeed he was God. We are gradually reaching on towards the means and the need of the coming of the Holy Spirit to reveal that mystery of his person. The two great stages in the history of the church's learning were: first, to come to knowledge of what he was, by experience of what he did; and second, to come to experience of what he did and does by knowledge of what he is. The former, which corresponds, in the OT to the patriarchal age, is that of the period when Jesus was on earth; the second, which answers to the history of Israel is that of the period of his ascension into heaven and the descent of the Holy Spirit.

When "he was awakened", by the voice of his disciples, "He rebuked the wind and the sea," just as Yahweh had done in the past, and just as he had "rebuked" the fever, and the convulsions of the demonized. For all are his creatures, even when they are lashed to frenzy by "hostile powers." And the sea he commanded as if it were a sentient being--"Be silent!" And immediately the wind was bound, the panting waves throbbed into stillness, and a great calm of rest fell upon the Lake. For when Jesus sleeps, there is storm; when he awakens there is great peace. Over these men now crept wonder, awe, and fear. No longer as at his first wonder-working in Capernaum, but rather "Who, then, is this?" So the great question which the enmity of the Pharisees had raised, and which partly had been answered in the parables was still more fully and practically met in what was a parable of help. And Jesus also wondered at the lack of their faith--where was it? And how was it that they had no faith?

The essence of this narrative lies in its details. Here also is a narrative which has the consensus of the three Evangelists which form part of the original evangelic tradition. It is told with such simplicity of language and a pictorial vividness of detail that carry their own evidence of its truth. Absolute historical demonstration of the event is, of course, impossible.

In this narrative we have witnessed the true humanity of Jesus as well as his divine power--the sleeping Jesus and the almighty word of rebuke and command by which nature obediently responded. We have also witnessed the helplessness and despondency of the disciples, and the divine certitude of conscious Omnipotence. With Jesus there can be no difficulty, since all is His--and all may be ours as well since he has come to help us; he is in the boat. He wonders at our shortcomings of faith. One thing only makes it impossible for him to help us--our own unbelief.

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m. LIBERATION OF THE DEMONIACS

Matthew 8:28-34

Mark 5:1-20

Luke 8:26-39

11. Read Matthew 8:28-34 in its entirety one time.
(1) Mark 5:1-20 (2) Luke 8:26-39
12. Read Matthew 8:28-30
(1) No reference
13. Read Matthew 8:31
(1) Luke 4:34, 41
14. Read Matthew 8:32-34
(1) No reference

Matthew 8:28-34

- 28 When he came to the other side, to the territory of the Gadarenes, two demoniacs who were coming from the tombs met him. They were so savage that no one could travel by that road.
- 29 They cried out, "What have you to do with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the appointed time?"
- 30 Some distance away a herd of many swine was feeding.
- 31 The demons pleaded with him, "If you drive us out, send us into the herd of swine."
- 32 And he said to them, "Go then!" They came out and entered the swine, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea where they drowned.
- 33 The swineherds ran away, and when they came to the town they reported everything, including what had happened to the demoniacs.
- 34 Thereupon the whole town came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him they begged him to leave their district.

Overview from JBC:

Matthew designates the location of this story more correctly than Mark or Luke.

The Hellenistic city of Gadara lay nearer to the Sea of Galilee than the Hellenistic city of Gerasa. The variant reading Gergesenes comes from a scholarly inference of Origen. The story is told in Mark with full and circumstantial details. It has obvious folkloristic traits, is vivid and moves rapidly. Even Matthew's abbreviation retains more length than his miracle stories usually have; but he has omitted most of Mark's details.

Overview from IB:

Jews did not keep swine, and it has been argued that therefore this story could have been current only among Gentiles. Yet Jewish Christians may have told it with some amusement, since it recounts the destruction of the unclean animals. The narrative embodies one of Mark's favorite ideas; namely, that the demons, being spirits, recognized Jesus as Son of God even when human beings did not. One finds it hard to believe that Jesus would bargain with the demons and permit them to possess the swine, and perhaps these details have been added to the story. Matthew omits the most edifying part of the narrative, the picture of the exorcised man clothed and in his right mind, yet it remains a dramatic portrayal of Jesus delivering men from the powers of evil. The locale must be in the Gentile territory of the Decapolis.

Verse 28:

two demoniacs -- Instead of Mark's one (5:2-5); Matthew omits Mark's description of the ferocity of the demoniacs. In the ancient world, Jewish and Gentile, ailments which exhibited some unusually repulsive feature or for which there was no explanation were often attributed to demons. It is rarely possible to define the ailment that is explained in this way; mental illness, of course, was more obviously explained by demonic possession than was physical disease. The important feature of this and other exorcisms performed by Jesus is not whether he accepted the common belief or spoke in terms of the common belief; those who formed the Gospel traditions could not have represented him as speaking in terms other than those familiar to them. The important fact is that the exorcisms show that Jesus liberates men from the fear of demons; demons have no real power and are instantly subdued by a word from him. The power of God overcomes any other power. The significance of exorcism is not that the Christian should or should not believe in demons and their power, but that the Christian should treat demonic power as nonexistent. There is only one power with which men must reckon, and that is the power of God. (JBC)

Manuscript evidence shows that Matthew must have written "Gadarenes," not "Gergesenes"; Gadara was the city he knew best. But Gadara is several miles away from the lake, and Gerasa or Jerash is still farther (although some of the best manuscripts of Mark read "Gerasenes"). Mark's original reading, like Luke's, is no doubt "Gergesenes"; and ruined towns named Kersa and Gerge are to be found on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. (IB)

Matthew makes this a story of "two" men; either to take the place of the omitted Mark 1:23-26, or perhaps for no conscious reason at all. See 9:27; 20:30 for other examples of this editorial habit. (IB)

Verse 29:

"What have you to do with us, -- Literally, "what to us and to you." The phrase expresses dissociation; it denies both community of interest and grounds for hostility and is effectively a dismissal. But the demons recognize Jesus. (JBC)

Son of God -- The title has rather full implications here. The dark powers of the world of spirits know with whom they have to contend before he is recognized by men. (JBC)

before the appointed time -- The appointed time is the eschatological consummation, when God will destroy every hostile power (I Corinthians 15:24-25). (JBC)

It is assumed that some of the demons will plague mankind until the day of judgment, when their power will be broken. Jesus is therefore acting “before the expected time.” (IB)

Verse 31:

The demons pleaded with him, -- The request of the demons to be sent into the herd of pigs is not mere mischievousness; the pig, the most unclean of all animals, is the suitable place for a demon. The presence of the herd shows that the episode occurs in Gentile territory. (JBC)

A story in the Talmud tells of a similar request on the part of a demon. (IB)

Verse 32:

the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea -- The rush of the pigs into the sea may seem a bit unfair to their owners; but in Jewish thought the unclean pig was good for absolutely nothing at all, and no one could incur a loss when a herd of pigs perished. Does the narrative mean that the demons perished? This seems to be the implication. The demons were driven from men into pigs, but even the pigs reject them; demons have no place in a world in which the saving power of God has entered in Jesus Christ. (JBC)

Matthew also omits most of the details of the recovery of the demoniacs. (JBC)

The Jews believed that demons liked to dwell in unclean places, such as tombs, and in bodies of water. (IB)

Verse 34:

they begged him to leave their district -- Mark does not exhibit in the story any of the remarkable faith shown by such Gentiles as the centurion. One who has power over demons is a dangerous person and may even himself be a demon of higher power; this is the point of the accusation of the Pharisees (12:24). The story is an instance of the failure of a wonder to inspire faith, and the Gospels make no comment on the reasons. Matthew omits the request of the man to follow Jesus, and the commission Jesus gives him to proclaim the wonder (Mark 5:18-19).

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15. Read Mark 5:1-20 in its entirety one time.

(1) Matthew 8:28-34

(2) Luke 8:26-39

16. Read Mark 5:1-8

(1) No reference

17. Read Mark 5:9

(1) Matthew 12:45

(3) Luke 11:26

(2) Luke 8:2

18. Read Mark 5:10-20
(1) No reference

Mark 5:1-20

- 1 They came to the other side of the sea, to the territory of the Gerasenes.
2 When he got out of the boat, at once a man from the tombs who had an unclean spirit met him.
3 The man had been dwelling among the tombs, and no one could restrain him any longer, even with a chain.
4 In fact, he had frequently been bound with shackles and chains, but the chains had been pulled apart by him and the shackles smashed, and no one was strong enough to subdue him.
5 Night and day among the tombs and on the hillsides he was always crying out and bruising himself with stones.
6 Catching sight of Jesus from a distance, he ran up and prostrated himself before him,
7 crying out in a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me!"
8 (He had been saying to him, "Unclean spirit, come out of the man!")
9 He asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "Legion is my name. There are many of us."
10 And he pleaded earnestly with him not to drive them away from that territory.
11 Now a large herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside.
12 And they pleaded with him, "Send us into the swine. Let us enter them."
13 And he let them, and the unclean spirits came out and entered the swine. The herd of about two thousand rushed down a steep bank into the sea, where they were drowned.
14 The swineherds ran away and reported the incident in the town and throughout the countryside. And people came out to see what had happened.
15 As they approached Jesus, they caught sight of the man who had been possessed by Legion, sitting there clothed and in his right mind. And they were seized with fear.
16 Those who witnessed the incident explained to them what had happened to the possessed man and to the swine.
17 Then they began to beg him to leave their district.
18 As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed pleaded to remain with him.
19 But he would not permit him but told him instead, "Go home to your family and announce to them all that the Lord in his pity has done for you."
20 Then the man went off and began to proclaim in the Decapolis what Jesus had done for him; and all were amazed.

Overview from JBC:

This is one of the most difficult miracle stories to interpret, because (granted the

face value of the swine's stampede into the sea) it is difficult to see its connection with the exorcism of the maniac. To explain the incident as an anecdote about the blindness of the Gentiles who prefer their unclean animals to their own Savior is to bypass this problem. More satisfying, although equally conservative, is the view of one scholar for whom "the story teaches that evil is self-destructive; it cannot exist by itself, but only in so far as it can gain a foothold in the good." Without pronouncing on its factual character another scholar thinks that originally the story circulated "in the primitive communities as an account of the way in which Jesus won fame in a foreign land, and it is not impossible that the action of the healed man at the end (5:18) would be seen as a sort of anticipation of the work of apostolic missionaries." Still yet another scholar believes that this is a midrash; that is, a story elaborated on original given facts, for the sake of showing that Jesus as the Savior of the Gentiles is the light of Isaiah 65:1-5. Without admitting that it is a "midrash", this hypothetical explanation is acceptable, (1) because the theme of Jesus' relations with the Gentiles is further developed in Mark 7:24-37; 8:1-10, and (2) because a comparison with other Marcan incidents gives one to suspect that what are customarily considered to be graphic eyewitness details may in reality be a form of religious interpretation. To explain this episode in this way, therefore, is not to deny its historical basis, but to recognize that certain details may be literary amplifications in the interest of the primary theological point: that Jesus' victorious confrontation with the power of demons was not without interest to those outside Judaism.

Overview from IB:

This long narrative is basically the story of one more exorcism, but of an extraordinarily difficult one, for the man had been possessed for a long time and could be neither subdued nor restrained (verses 3-5). Jesus was in pagan territory, and the demoniac was presumably a pagan. The calm confidence and courage with which Jesus handles him is characteristic. One can only imagine the danger involved. Compared with this central feature of the story, such details as the conference with the demons (verses 9-10), and the destruction of the herd of swine (verses 11-16) are secondary and have the appearance of typical elaboration in folk tales. Some scholars have thought that the story is a transferred one, and originally related the success of some unknown Jewish exorcist for whom the loss of a herd of unclean animals belonging to pagans would be a matter of indifference; the detail perhaps even introduced a note of humor in the story. But that is to overlook the fact that for the early Palestinian Christians, who were also Jews, the pig was likewise unclean. Others have thought that the swine were alarmed by the madman's behavior, and so took fright and stampeded over the cliff; but this theory overlooks the fact that the demoniac grew calm, not excited, in the presence of Jesus. The notion that the legion of demons could enter the swine (verse 13) was popular superstition, no doubt; but it seems better to leave the story as it stands, as a folk tale current in a pagan neighborhood but a folk tale about Jesus and his restoration of a notorious and dangerous demoniac, the man with the thousand devils.

Verse 1:

[the territory of the Gerasenes](#) -- Gerasa (Jerash) is 33 miles southeast of Lake Gennesaret and therefore an unsuitable locale in view of 5:13. Variant readings are "Gadarenes" (of Gadara, 6 miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee) and "Gergesenes" (of Gergesa, an otherwise unidentified place). At all events Jesus is in pagan territory, and

his presence there reflects Isaiah 65:1. (JBC)

Verses 1-2:

Some manuscripts read “Gerasenes,” others Gergesenes, and others “Gadarenes.” Origen preferred “Gergesenes,” noting that both Gerasa and Gadara lay too far from the lake, but that Gergesa was near by and had a cliff overlooking the lake of Tiberias. But the original text of Mark is not to be settled by topography: the story is legendary, and in any case we are only in “the country” of the Gadarenes or Gerasenes, rather than in one of the cities. “The tombs” was a favorite haunt of demons in ancient tales, and apparently also of madmen. Perhaps the unclean spirits were thought to be the souls of warriors who had died violent deaths in battle, a notion surviving from primitive times. (IB)

Verse 2:

from the tombs -- Or, “out of the tombs”. This detail is stressed again in verses 3 and 5; cf. Isaiah 65:4. (JBC)

Verse 3:

no one could restrain him any longer -- Mark dwells graphically on the impossibility of subduing the maniac, perhaps an image of the rebellious people described in Isaiah 65:2. (JBC)

Verse 7:

Son of the Most High -- The Greek adjective used here is a typically Gentile designation for the God of Israel (Daniel 3:26; 4:2). The maniac’s desire to keep Jesus at a distance may correspond to Isaiah 65:5a. (JBC)

Verses 7-8:

As in 1:24, the idiom means “What have you to do with me?”; that is, “What do you what with me?” It is characteristic of ancient tales of exorcism that the demon recognizes the exorcist and fears him. Ancient literature tells a story where the demon begs not to be tortured, or to be forced to confess what it is--that is, to give its name--which would place it at once in the power of the exorcist. “Most High God” is a divine title found in ancient Syria and Palestine, and common in Diaspora Judaism in the first century. Verse 8 is editorial, supplying a detail overlooked between verses 6 and 7. (IB)

Verse 9:

"What is your name?" -- Jesus is pictured as overpowering his adversary by learning his name. (JBC)

Legion -- It has been suggested that the Aram original read “soldier”; thus, “My name is ‘Soldier,’ since we [demons] are a great host [and resemble one another as soldiers do]”. A translator understood the Aram word for its alternate meaning, “legion,” thought that this indicated a plurality of demons, and accordingly added verses 12-13. This would explain why, outside of verses 10, 12, 13, there is not indication that the man was possessed by more than one demon. (JBC)

A “legion” usually numbered five or six thousand men. However, the hosts of demons, as well as of angels (Matthew 26:53), were thought of as organized in companies and “legions,” as we know from ancient Jewish folk tales. (IB)

Verse 10:

Having given his name, or rather their name -- the demons speaking through the lips of the demoniac, whose personality was now identified with them--the best possible terms they can hope for are a compromise: not to be sent “away out of the country.” (IB)

Verse 11:

a large herd of swine -- Cf. Isaiah 65:4, where the people are said to sit in tombs, pass the night in caves, and eat the flesh of swine. (JBC)

Verses 11-13:

“Hillside” is the proper term here. The repeated “they” with changing antecedents in verses 14-17 is characteristic of folk narratives, but the meaning is clear enough. “Coasts” is simply “neighborhood.” The people there, according to this part of the story, feared Jesus, the great exorcist and subduer of spirits, more than they feared the demoniac; his unknown powers might work even more harm than the destruction of the swine. To Mark this may possibly have meant that even in pagan territory Jesus was rejected; at the same time, the confession in verse 7, “Son of the Most High God,” was significant (cf. 1:24; 3:11). The testimony of the demons who possessed supernatural clairvoyance, was important for Mark and for his Greco-Roman; that is, pagan-born readers. It would also have the same value for many first-century Jews. (IB)

Verse 13:

The herd of about two thousand rushed down a steep bank into the sea -- This may be an image of the annihilation of the power that held the Gentiles captive (cf. Elijah’s slaughter of the prophets of Baal, I Kings 18:40). (JBC)

Verse 15:

they were seized with fear -- Or, “they were afraid.” This looks like the original ending of the miracle story. If so, verses 16-17 would have been added to supply a motive for Jesus’ withdrawal to the other side of the lake (5:21). (JBC)

Verses 18-20:

These verses may have been an integral part of the original story, complementing the reaction of the people mentioned in verse 15; Jesus is shown to be as humane as he is awe-inspiring. The present style and vocabulary, however, betray the Evangelist’s hand and his interest to interpret this event as an image of the Gentiles seeking to follow Christ. (JBC)

Verse 19:

he would not permit him -- Or, “he refused.” It is useless to speculate on why Jesus did not allow the man to become a disciple. The important thing is that here Jesus does not enjoin the “Messianic secrecy” as he does upon Jews (1:43-44; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26), and that the man goes out to “proclaim” how much Jesus had done for him. (JBC)

Verses 19-20:

In spite of this testimony, Jesus bids the man “go home... and tell them how much the Lord”; that is, God, had done for him--this, rather than proclaim the message of Jesus as Son of God, or Messiah. The verses cannot, accordingly, be viewed as evidence that Mark thought Jesus was opening a Gentile mission. In fact, he does not say that these were pagans, unless the locale in verse 1 was expected to convey this suggestion. The “Decapolis” (“ten towns”) was of course pagan; the ten towns lay in Trans-Jordan--except for Scythopolis, which was west of the river Jordan--and had been founded and federated by Pompey as homes for his veterans. Perhaps Mark intended to stress the man’s proclamation of what “Jesus had done for him” (cf. the command in verse 19). But it is still a question if Mark thought of this as the beginning of a mission to Gentiles. Such an understanding is not explicit here, nor is it taken for granted later in the book. But the

tradition suggests that knowledge about Jesus' ministry spread far and wide even beyond the borders of Galilee proper. (IB)

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19. Read Luke 8:26-39
(1) Matthew 8:28-34 (2) Mark 5:1-20
20. Read Luke 8:26-27
(1) No reference
21. Read Luke 8:28-29
(1) Matthew 8:29 (3) Luke 4:33-35
(2) Mark 1:23-24
22. Read Luke 8:30-39
(1) No reference

Luke 8:26-39

- 26 Then they sailed to the territory of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee.
- 27 When he came ashore a man from the town who was possessed by demons met him. For a long time he had not worn clothes; he did not live in a house, but lived among the tombs.
- 28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him; in a loud voice he shouted, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me!"
- 29 For he had ordered the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (It had taken hold of him many times, and he used to be bound with chains and shackles as a restraint, but he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into deserted places.)
- 30 Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "Legion," because many demons had entered him.
- 31 And they pleaded with him not to order them to depart to the abyss.
- 32 A herd of many swine was feeding there on the hillside, and they pleaded with him to allow them to enter those swine; and he let them.
- 33 The demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.
- 34 When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran away and reported the incident in the town and throughout the countryside.
- 35 People came out to see what had happened and, when they approached Jesus, they discovered the man from whom the demons had come out sitting at his feet. He was clothed and in his right mind, and they were seized with fear.
- 36 Those who witnessed it told them how the possessed man had been saved.
- 37 The entire population of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them because they were seized with great fear. So he got into a boat and returned.
- 38 The man from whom the demons had come out begged to remain with him, but he sent him away, saying,

- 39 "Return home and recount what God has done for you." The man went off and proclaimed throughout the whole town what Jesus had done for him.

Overview from JBC:

For this one time in Luke, Jesus leaves Jewish territory, but the Evangelist is careful to associate it with his story of the Galilean ministry--he explicitly notes that it is "opposite Galilee" (verse 26). The scene is strange and fraught with tension; in Mark the details are even stronger and the discourse is direct. Of all the miracle stories in the canonical Gospels this one comes closest to the type found in the apocryphal Gospels.

Overview from IB:

Mental disease was often explained in ancient times as the consequence of demon possession, and Jesus' healing ministry is frequently described in the Gospels as an act of exorcism. In this instance Jesus restores a raving lunatic to health of mind by ridding him of a host of evil spirits. Because they could exist only in human or animal bodies, they begged permission to enter a herd of swine, which then plunged over a precipice and perished in the lake. The unusual detail of this particular story convinces many interpreters that it is primitive. Others regard its elaborate form as an indication that the storyteller's art has had free play in its composition. The incident has frequently been rationalized on the precarious hypothesis of coincidence: Jesus healed a demented man; a herd of swine stampeded down a steep slope into the lake; and the two events were associated by those who described them. Whatever its origin, the story of the Gerasene demoniac articulates the faith of the church that Jesus came to free men from the power of Satan and points the truth that evil is self-destructive.

Verse 26:

[the territory of the Gerasenes](#) -- Or, "the country of the Gergesenes." The manuscripts have two different readings here: either "of the Gerasenes" [probably modern Jerash] and "of the Gergesenes," [inhabitants of Gergesa, or modern Kersa, directly opposite Magdala]. It is best to follow the latter reading. Notice that Matthew 8:28 reads "of the Gadarenes"; this fluctuation of the name of the locality and other details in the story should caution the reader against trying too hard to reconstruct what really happened. (JBC)

There has been some early confusion in the place named. "Gerasenes" is the best attested reading in Mark and Luke, but Gerasa, the modern Jerash, was forty miles southeast of the lake and therefore geographically impossible. "Gadarenes" has the best attestation in Matthew, but Gadara was also not a site that was "opposite Galilee." It was seven miles to the south of the lake. Gergesa, halfway down the eastern shore, would fit the narrative, and "Gergesenes" has strong manuscript support in Luke, but the name was apparently introduced into Alexandrian texts of the NT in the early third century as a deliberate geographical correction. (IB)

Verse 27:

[a man . . . possessed by demons](#) -- Luke here smooths out the repetitions of Mark's account and adds that the man had roamed the tombs for a long time unclothed. (JBC)

"For a long time he had worn no clothes" is an editorial inference from verse 35 (Mark 5:15). In popular thought "tombs" were the dwelling place of "demons," and one

whom they had possessed would naturally live there. Furthermore, in Palestine they were often caves or caverns hewn out of rock and could provide a place of refuge for one who was ostracized from society. (IB)

Verse 28:

[Son of the Most High God](#) -- The possessed man--a Lucan addition-- recognizes divinity within Jesus. (JBC)

The victim is the mouthpiece of the demons. As in 4:33-37 the unclean spirits recognize the supernatural powers of “Jesus” before they are evident to men and take steps to counteract them. “I beseech you,” instead of Mark’s “I adjure you by God,” which Luke probably thought an incongruous formula for a demon. (IB)

Verse 29:

We are told belatedly that Jesus had already begun the exorcism. This popular case history of a violent maniac is based on the description at the beginning of Mark’s narrative. (IB)

Verse 30:

["What is your name?"](#) -- Knowledge of one’s name presupposed or granted power over that one. (JBC)

[Legion](#) -- A Latinism transcribed into Greek; the name implies the presence of a vast number of demons. (JBC)

To control a demon an exorcist had to know his name. “Legion” was Latin for an army division of about six thousand, but the word had also been naturalized in Aramaic. According to popular diagnosis, the severity of an affliction was proportionate to the number of demons who had caused it (cf. Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out.”). (IB)

Verse 31:

[to the abyss](#) -- This phrase heightens the attack on the demonic forces present; they are to be sent either into the abode of the dead (Romans 10:7; Psalm 106:26) or to the final prison of Satan (Revelation 20:3). Though aware that this is their destiny, they beg not to be sent there yet. (JBC)

Verses 31-33:

“What had happened”, from the point of the “herdsmen,” would be the loss of the swine. They “fled” and aroused the curiosity and superstitious concern of the neighborhood. The Gerasenes investigated, and found the demoniac “clothes and in his right mind” -- dressed like a sane man and restored to mental health. That he was sitting “at the feet of Jesus” is a Lukan detail. Eyewitnesses of the exorcism supplement the swineherds’ story, and their evidence helps to substantiate the miracle. All this is true to the form of miracle stories, whether sacred or profane, but is given here in greater detail than is usual in the gospel tradition. (IB)

Verse 32:

[many swine](#) -- Or, “many pigs”. See comment on Matthew 8:31-32. (JBC)

Verse 33:

[was drowned](#) -- Obviously the problem of the “ensuing loss” of someone’s property was of no concern to the Evangelist--and it should not be that of the modern reader of this story. To ask about it is to miss the point. (JBC)

Verse 35:

sitting at his feet -- In the attitude of a disciple before the Master or the Rabbi (cf. 10:39). (JBC)

Verse 36:

how the possessed man had been saved -- Luke insists that Jesus has accomplished a work of salvation (see 8:12). (JBC)

Verse 37:

"All the people" of the district is characteristic of exaggeration from Luke. "For they were seized with great fear" explains the request that had stood unsupported in Mark. The affair was uncanny and its author inspired a sense of dread. (IB)

Verses 38-39:

"The man from whom the demons had gone" wished to become a disciple but Jesus rejected his petition. "God" for Mark's equivocal "the Lord," and "throughout the whole city" for "in the Decapolis"--an independent league of Hellenistic cities that is never mentioned by name in Luke. Jesus' instructions are an apparent exception to the custom of enjoining sick persons who had been healed or their friends, to keep the matter a strict secret--taken over from Mark by Luke in 5:14; 8:56. It is difficult to follow those interpreters who detect a contrast in verse 39 between the command and its performance--the patient's "home" instead of the "whole city" and "God" as the agent instead of "Jesus." Perhaps the theory of the messianic secret was not imposed on this story because it was localized outside the strictly Jewish parts of Palestine. (IB)

Verse 39:

Jesus recruits this Gentile as one of his first "evangelists." (JBC)

Overall Summary from LToJC:

The day of wonders has not yet ended. Most writers have suggested that the healing of the demonized on the other side took place at early dawn on the following day after the storm on the Lake. But the distance is so short that even if we make allowances for the delay caused by the storm, the passage could scarcely have occupied the whole night. This supposition would be further confirmed if "the evening" when Jesus embarked was what the Jews called "the first evening"; that is, the time when the sun is declining in the west, but before it had actually set; after the complete setting of the sun, this was considered "the second evening." It seems unreasonable to suggest that either the disciples or the other boats would have put to sea after nightfall. The scene gains in grandeur and presents a fitting background if we suppose Jesus and his disciples to have landed on the other side late in the evening, when the moon was shedding a pale light on the weird scene, and cast shadows upon the sea by the steep cliff which the herd of swine fell off. This would also give time for the dispersion afterwards, not only into "the city", but into "the country" also of those who had fed the swine. In that case, it would be in the early morning that the Gerasenes afterwards resorted and that he afterward returned to Capernaum. Finally, this would allow sufficient time for those miracles which took place on that same day in Capernaum after his return. All the circumstances lead us to regard the healing of the demonized at Gerasa as a night-time scene, immediately on Jesus' arrival from Capernaum, and after the calming of the sea.

We can, with confidence, describe the exact place where Jesus and his disciples touched the other shore. The ruins against the plain of Gennesaret, which still bears the name Kersa, or Gersa, must represent the ancient Gerasa. This is the correct reading of

Mark's, and probably Luke's also, perhaps even Matthew's Gospels. The locality entirely meets the requirements of the narrative. About a quarter of an hour to the south of Gerasa is a steep bluff, which descends abruptly on a narrow ledge of shore. A terrified herd running down this cliff could not have recovered its foothold, and must inevitably have been hurled into the Lake beneath. Again, the whole country around is burrowed with limestone caverns and rock-chambers for the dead, such as those which were the dwelling of the demonized. Altogether the scene forms a fitting background to the narrative.

From these tombs the demonized, who is especially singled out by Mark and Luke, as well as his less prominent companion, came forth to meet Jesus. Much has been written on Jewish demonology that is misleading. According to common Jewish superstition, the evil spirits dwelt especially in lonely desolate places, and also among tombs. There was much confusion in the minds of the demonized between their own notions, and the ideas that were imposed on them by the demons. It is quite in accordance with the Jewish notions of the demonized that, according to the more circumstantial account found in Luke, he should feel as it were driven into the deserts, and that he was in the tombs, while, according to Mark, he was "night and day in the tombs, and in the mountains" the very order of the words indicating the notion (as in Jewish belief) that it was chiefly at night that evil spirits were prone to haunt burying-places.

We repeat here that it was characteristic of the demonized that they were incapable of separating their own consciousness from the ideas influenced upon them by the demons--their own identity was merged, so to speak, and to that extent it was lost in that of their tormentors. In this respect the demonized state was kin to madness. Self-consciousness, or rather than sense of individualism; that is, the consciousness of distinct and independent individuality, and with it the power of self-origination in matters mental and moral (free-will), distinguish the human soul from the mere animal spirit. But in maniacal disease this power is in abeyance, or temporarily lost through physical causes, such as disease of the brain as the medium of communication between the mind and the world of sense perception; disease of the nervous system, through which ordinarily impressions are conveyed to and from the senses; or disease of both brain and nervous system, when previously existing impressions on the brain (the memory, and possibly the imagination) may be excited without corresponding outward causes. If in such cases the absolute power of self-origination and self-action is lost to the mind, habits of sin and vice (or moral disease) may have an analogous effect as regards moral freedom -- the power of self-origination and action. In the demonized state the two appear combined, the cause being neither disease nor vice, but the presence of a superior power of evil. This loss of individualism, and the subjection of one's identity to that of the demon might, while it lasted, be called temporary "possession," in so far as the mental and moral condition of the person was for that time, not one of freedom and origination, but in the control of the possessing demon.

One practical inference may be drawn from this somewhat obtuse discussion. The language and conduct of the demonized, whether seemingly his own, or that of the demons who influenced him, must always be regarded as a mixture of the Jewish-human and the demoniacal. The demonized speaks and acts as a Jew under the control of a

demon. Thus if he chooses solitary places by day, and tombs by night, it is not that demons really preferred such habitations, but that the Jews imagined it, and that the demons, acting on the existing consciousness, would lead him, in accordance with his preconceived notions, to select such places. Here also mental disease offers points of analogy. For the demonized would speak and act in accordance with his previous (Jewish) demonological ideas. He would not become a new man, but he would be the old man only under the influence of the demon, just as in mania a person truly and consistently speaks and acts, although under the false impressions which a diseased brain conveys to him. The fact that in the demonized state a man's identity was not superseded, but controlled, enables us to account for many phenomena without either confounding demonism with mania, or else imputing to Jesus such accommodation to the notions of the times, as it is only untenable in itself, but forbidden even by the language of the present narrative.

The description of the demonized coming out of the tombs to meet Jesus as he touched the shore at Gerasa is vivid in the extreme. His violence, the impossibility of control by others, the absence of self-control, his homicidal, and almost suicidal, frenzy, are all depicted. Evidently, it was the object to set forth the extreme degree of the demonized state. Jesus, who had been charged by the Pharisees with being the embodiment and messenger of Satan, is here face to face with the extreme manifestation of demoniac power and influence. It is once more a miracle in parable which is about to take place. The question, which has been raised by the enemies, is about to be brought to the issue of a practical demonstration. We do not deny that the contest and the victory, this miracle, in fact the whole series of miracles of which it forms a part, are extraordinary, even in the series of Christ's miracles. Our explanation proceeds on the very grounds that such was, and must have been, the case. The teaching by parables, and the parabolic miracles which follow, form, so to speak, an ascending climax, in contrast to the terrible charge which by-and-by would assume the proportions of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, and issue in the betrayal and judicial murder of Jesus. There are critical epochs in the history of the Kingdom of God, when the power of evil, standing out in sharpest contrast, challenges that overwhelming manifestation of the divine, as such, to bear down and crush that which opposes it. Periods of that kind are characterized by miraculous intercession of power, unique even in Bible history. Such a period was that of Elijah and Elisha in the OT, with its altogether exceptional series of miracles, and in the NT, that after the first formulated charge of the Pharisees against the Christ.

With irresistible power the demonized was drawn to Jesus as he touched the shore at Gerasa. As always, the first effect of the contact was a fresh convulsion, but in this particular case it was not physical but moral. As always also, the demons knew Jesus, and his presence seemed to constrain their confession of themselves, and therefore of him. As in nature the introduction of a dominant element sometimes reveals the hidden presence of others, which are either attracted or repelled by it, so the presence of Jesus obliged the manifestation, and, in the case of these evil spirits, the self-confession of the powers of evil. In some measure it is the same still. The introduction of grace brings to light and experience sin that was previously unknown, and the new life brings consciousness of, and provokes contest with evil within, of which the very existence had previously been unsuspected. In the present instance the immediate effect was homage,

which presently manifested itself in language such as might have been expected.

The words spoken by the demonized were not a combination of the person himself and the demon within--the control of the demons was absolute over the man. Their language led to his worship; their feelings and fears appeared in his language. It was the self-confession of the demons, when obliged to come into Jesus' presence and do homage, which made the man fall down and, in the well known Jewish formula, recorded by all three evangelists, say, "What have I to do with Thee?, or rather, "What between me and Thee?", meaning what have we in common? On the part of the demons, which underlay the plea not to inflict torment on them, the language itself was that of the demonized, and the form in which their fear was expressed was that of his thinking. The demons, in their hold on their victim, could not but own their inferiority, and apprehend their defeat and subjection, especially on such an occasion; and the Jew, whose consciousness was under their control--not unified but identified with it--exclaimed: "I plead with thee that thou not torment me."

This strange mixture of the demoniac with the human, or rather, this expression of underlying demoniac thought in the forms and modes of thinking of the Jewish victim, explains the expressed fear of present actual torment, or as Matthew (who does not seem to have been an eye-witness to this event) expresses it: "Thou art come to torment us before the time." When Jesus commanded the unclean spirits to come out of the man, it may have been, that in so doing He used the Name of the Most High God; or perhaps the command itself may have been in the form in which the Jewish speaker clothed the consciousness of the demons, with which his own was identified.

It may be conjectured that it was partly in order to break this identification, or rather to show the demonized that it was not real, and only the consequence of the control which the demons had over him, that the Lord asked his name. To this the man answered in the dual consciousness: "My name is Legion: for we are many." Such might be the subjective motive for Christ's question. Its objective reason may have been to show the power of the demoniac possession in the present instance, thus marking it as an altogether extreme case. If we recall that the answer was once more in the forms of Jewish thinking, it will enable us to avoid the strange notion that the word "Legion" conveys the idea of six thousand armed and strong warriors of the devil. It was a common Jewish idea that, under certain circumstances, a legion of hurtful spirits were "on the watch for men, saying: When shall he fall into the hands of one of these things, and be taken?"

This identification of the demons with the demonized, in consequence of which he thought with their consciousness, and they spoke not only through him, but in the forms of his thinking, may also account for the last and most difficult part of the narrative. Their main object and wish was not to be banished from the country and people, or as Luke says: "not to depart into the abyss." On that very narrow strip of the shore, between the steep cliff that rises in the background and the lake in the foreground, stand Jesus with his disciples and the demonized. The wish of the demons is not to be sent out of the country--not back into the abyss. Up on top of that cliff a great herd of swine is feeding; up that cliff is "into the swine," which also agrees with Jewish thoughts concerning uncleanness. It was neither asked nor given for the demons to enter the swine, Jesus neither hindered nor permitted them to enter the swine. He only said: "Go."

What followed belongs to the phenomena of super-sensuous influences upon

animals--of which the rationale is impossible to explain. How the unclean spirits could enter into the swine is a question without any explanation until such time when we know more about the animal soul. We can understand, however, that under such circumstances a panic would seize the herd, that it would madly rush down the steep cliff, and in its haste would be unable to halt its pace, but would perish in the sea. We can also perceive how the real object of the demons was thus attained--they did not leave their country while Jesus was entreated to leave it.

The weird scene over which the moon had shed its ghostlike light, was now past. The unearthly utterances of the demonized, the wild panic among the herd on the cliff, the mad rush down the steep incline, the splashing waters as the helpless animals were precipitated into the lake--all this makes up a picture, unsurpassed for vivid, terrible realism. Now suddenly silence fell upon them. From above, the keepers of the herd had seen it all. From the first, as they saw the demonized running to Jesus, they must have watched with eager interest. In the clear Eastern air not a word that was spoken could have been lost to their hearing. Now in wild terror they fled into Gerasa--into the country around them to tell others about what had just taken place.

Morning has come, and the man no longer demonized is now "sitting at the feet of Jesus," learning from him, and clothed and in his right mind. He had been brought to God, restored to self, to reason, and to human society--and all this was done by Jesus at whose feet he now sat. He is gratefully and humbly sitting-- "a disciple" of Jesus. Is He not then the Son of God? Viewing this miracle, as a historical fact, viewing it as a parabolic miracle, viewing it also as symbolic of what has happened in all ages--is he not the Son of the Most High God? In the morning light is there not now that same calmness and majesty of conscious Almighty power as was shown on the evening before when He rebuked the storm and calmed the sea?

Contrary to what was commonly the case in regards to the healing of the demonized man, when the evil spirits came out of him there was no convulsion of physical distress. Could it be that the more complete and lasting the demonic possession was, the less the purely physical symptoms attended it?

Now from town and country have the people come, who had been startled by the tidings which those who fed the swine had brought. It is not necessary to suppose that their request that Jesus depart from their coasts was prompted only by the loss of the herd of swine. There could be no doubt in their minds, that One possessing supreme and unlimited power was in their midst. Among these superstitious men, and their unwillingness to submit absolutely to the Kingdom of which Christ had brought, there could be only one effect of what they had heard, and now witnessed in the person of the healed demonized--and that was awe and fear. The "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man" is the natural expression of a mind conscious of sin when brought into contact with the divine, whose supreme and absolute Power is considered hostile. This feeling would be greatly increased in measure as the mind was under the influence of superstitious fears.

In such a place and under such circumstances Jesus could not have continued. As he once more entered the boat, the healed demonized humbly, earnestly entreated that he might go with his Savior. It would have seemed to him, as if he could not bear to lose his new found happiness. It was as if there was calm, safety, and happiness only in the presence of Jesus. It was not to be found among those wild mountains, and yet wilder

men. He had been for a long time an outcast from his fellow-men, and so why should he now be driven from that fellowship he desperately needed, only to be left to himself once more. Yet he was sent on a mission by Jesus to go back, now healed to his own people, and to publish there in the city and throughout the Decapolis how great things had been done for him by Jesus--this was to be his life work from now on. In accomplishing this he would find both safety and great happiness.

“All men did marvel.” Jesus would soon return to that Decapolis, and after such a time as the healed demonized had prepared the way for him to come.

Session 19

In the scriptural text, the episode concerning Jairus' daughter is interrupted by the healing of the woman with a hemorrhage. Immediately following that healing, the episode continues with the healing of Jairus' daughter. All of the Synoptic evangelists report these two healings in the same way format. First comes an introduction to Jairus' distress, then the healing of the woman with a hemorrhage, and then followed by the healing of Jarius' daughter.

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n. THE HEALING OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER AND THE HEALING OF THE WOMAN WITH A HEMORRHAGE

Mark 5:21-24
Luke 8:40-42
Matthew 9:18-19
Mark 5:25-34
Luke 8:43-48
Matthew 9:20-22
Mark 5:35-43
Luke 8:49-56
Matthew 9:23-26

1. Read Mark 5:21-24 in its entirety one time.
(1) No reference

Mark 5:21-24

- 21 When Jesus had crossed again (in the boat) to the other side, a large crowd gathered around him, and he stayed close to the sea.
- 22 One of the synagogue officials, named Jairus, came forward. Seeing him he fell at his feet
- 23 and pleaded earnestly with him, saying, "My daughter is at the point of death. Please, come lay your hands on her that she may get well and live."
- 24 He went off with him, and a large crowd followed him and pressed upon him.

Overview from JBC:

The interposition of one narrative within another occurs in four other places in Mark: 3:19b-21 (22-20) 31-35; 6:6b-13 (14-29) 30; 11:12-14 (15-19) 20-25; 14:53 (54) 55-65 (66-73).

Overview from IB:

The rest of chapter 5, concluding the present series of great miracles, affords an example of Mark's "telescoping" of narratives; the healing of the woman takes place en route to the house of Jairus, whose daughter is restored. Both stories tell of restoration by touch, and both are stupendous miracles. Jairus' daughter was dead (verse 35) by the time Jesus arrived, and the woman's case had been all but hopeless. The scene is laid in

Jewish territory, presumably on the west side of the lake; Jairus is “a ruler of the synagogue, what we would call a lay president of the congregation. Verse 21 is editorial; Mark conceives this whole series of events (from 4:1) as taking place on or near the sea.

Verse 22:

One of the synagogue officials -- Jairus’ confident demeanor towards Jesus contrasts with the hostility of the scribes (2:6, 16, 24; 3:6, 22). (JBC)

Verse 23:

lay your hands on her -- Healing through the imposition of hands is not mentioned in the OT or in rabbinical writings. It does occur, however, in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Greek verbs used here appear in the LXX as “lay upon” and “rebuke” and recur in NT healings and exorcisms (Mark 6:5; 7:32; 8:23-25; 16:18; Luke 4:40-41; 13:13; Acts 9:12, 17-18; 28:8; and perhaps Mark 1:31; 9:27; Matthew 9:29). (JBC)

The laying of hands was a recognized method of spiritual healing, in use in the apostolic church, and sine. It was one often used by Jesus (cf. 6:5). No description of the girl’s illness is given, such as might permit a modern diagnosis. (IB)

she may get well and live -- The verbs are typical of Christian teachings and, on a deeper level, mean “that she may be saved and have [eternal] life. (JBC)

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2. Read Luke 8:40-42 in its entirety one time.

(1) No reference

Luke 8:40-42

- 40 When Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him.
41 And a man named Jairus, an official of the synagogue, came forward. He fell at the feet of Jesus and begged him to come to his house,
42 because he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, and she was dying. As he went, the crowds almost crushed him.

Overview from JBC:

Only here in the Gospels are two miracles told in a single account, probably because they happened that way. On the other hand, the number 12 (the age of the girl and the number of years of the woman’s sickness) may have been the literary link for the separate units.

Overview from IB:

Mark had a fondness for intertwining one story into the context of another, and Luke had used the same device on his own initiative in 7:36-50. It heightens the dramatic effect of the framework narrative, and in this instance the second episode occupies Jesus’ attention during the necessary interval between his interview with Jairus and the arrival of the messenger from the ruler’s house. The fact that the girl was twelve years of age and that the woman had been ailing for twelve years seemed significant to Luke, who rearranged his source to draw attention to it--verse 42 is at the beginning of his story and at the end of Mark’s. Luke has drastically abbreviated Mark’s narrative.

Verse 41:

Jairus -- A Greek form of the Hebrew name which means “he gives light” (Judges 10:3). As a ruler of the synagogue, he was under no obligation to kneel before Jesus; desperation has pulled him to his knees. According to Luke (4:33-37), Jesus had worked his first miracle in Jairus’ synagogue. (JBC)

Verse 42:

an only daughter -- Or, “an only child.” Luke’s addition (see 7:12; 9:38). (JBC)

Verses 40-42:

Jesus returned to his point of departure as of verse 22 (cf. verse 37c)--presumably to the vicinity of Capernaum. Mark is less explicit, though characteristically long-winded. Jairus as a name does not recur in Luke’s narrative, is lacking in Matthew’s version, and is absent from the Codex Bezae text of Mark. Originally anonymous individuals tend to get names with the passage of time, and this one may have been Luke’s contribution to the tradition. “A ruler of the synagogue” was an official appointed by the elders to supervise the conduct of worship, and there could be several in larger synagogues (cf. Acts 13:15). “Only” is Luke’s inference from Mark’s “little daughter”--an affectionate diminutive in Greek. (IB)

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3. Read Matthew 9:18-19 in its entirety one time.
(1) No reference

Matthew 9:18-19

- 18 While he was saying these things to them, an official came forward, knelt down before him, and said, "My daughter has just died. But come, lay your hand on her, and she will live."
- 19 Jesus rose and followed him, and so did his disciples.

Overview from JBC:

The account of Mark is sharply abbreviated in Matthew; and here it is easier to trace the theological basis of the abbreviation. The transitional phrase in Matthew connects this incident with the sayings; in Mark the miracle follows the return of Jesus from the territory of Gerasa.

Overview from IB:

The first two stories emphasize the absolute necessity of faith. Notice how Matthew has changed Mark’s wording in verse 18 (=Mark 5:23) and verse 28 (=Mark 10:47-52). The note of faith was present in Mark’s corresponding stories, with the exception of Mark 8:22-26. If the narratives are detached from their context, “faith” may be no more than confidence in Jesus’ power to heal. But Jesus did more than heal. He always called men back to the one God. His presence and teaching must have awakened religious faith in those to whom he ministered so that they actually put their trust in God, whose power flowed through him.

Verse 18:

an official -- Or, “a ruler.” In Mark and Luke the more precise title of synagogue officer appears. In Matthew the petition is for a resurrection from the dead; in Mark it is a petition for a cure. The large crowd of Mark does not appear here; his harmonizes with

the omission of Mark 5:31-32. (JBC)

The word rendered “ruler” in Greek is applied to various kinds of officials. Here it may mean the same as Mark’s “ruler of the synagogue,” perhaps the one who was chosen by the elders from among their number to preside over the services and business of the synagogue, but the same Greek word may simply mean the head of the local community or one of the elders. Luke uses the word frequently. “My daughter has just died”: in Mark 5:23, the father says, “My little daughter is at the point of death.” Here the father manifests very great faith, since no raising of the dead has previously been reported in this Gospel. (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

There seems to be a remarkable correlation between the two miracles which Jesus had performed after leaving Capernaum, and those which he carried out upon his return. In one sense they are complimentary to each other. The stilling of the storm and the healing of the demonized were manifestations of the absolute power inherent in Christ; the recovery of the woman and the raising of Jairus’ daughter, were evidence of the absolute effectiveness of faith. The unlikeliness of dominion over the storm, and of command over a legion of demons, answers to that of recovery obtained in such a manner, and of restoration when illness had passed into actual death. There even seems to be a correspondence in the circumstances although they are at opposite poles. For example, in the one case, the Word spoken to the unconscious element, in the other the touch of the unconscious Christ. In the one case, the absolute command of Christ over a world of resisting demons, in the other absolute certainty of faith against the hostile element of actual fact. The Divine character of the Savior appears in the absoluteness of His Omnipotence, and the Divine character of His Mission in the all-powerfulness of faith which it called forth.

On the shore of Capernaum many were gathered on that morning after the storm. It may have been that the boats which had accompanied His had returned to friendly shelter prior to the storm, and they had returned with anxious tidings concerning that storm out on the Lake. There they had gathered now in the calm morning breeze, and friends were eagerly looking out for the well-known boat that bore the Master and His disciples. As it came into sight, and making its way towards Capernaum, the multitude would gather in waiting for return of Jesus--whose words and deeds were mysterious, but mysteries of the Kingdom. Quickly, as he again stepped onto that well-known shore, he was welcomed, and soon surrounded by the crowd with inconveniently pressed upon him in their eagerness, curiosity, and expectancies. It seemed as if they had all been “waiting for him,” and he had been away all too long for their impatience. The news spread rapidly, and reached two homes where His help was desperately needed; where it alone could now be of possible assistance. The two concerned must have gone to seek that help about the same time, and prompted by the same feelings of expectancy. Both Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, and the woman suffering these many years from her disease, had faith. But the weakness of the one arose from excess in the many years of suffering and which threatened to merge into superstition, while the weakness of the other was due to defect, in the sense of loss of life, and it threatened to end in despair. In both cases faith had to be called out, tried, purified, and so perfected; in both the thing sought for was, humanely speaking, unattainable, and the means employed, seemingly powerless; yet in

both, the outward and the inward result required were obtained through the power of Christ, and by the peculiar discipline to which, in His all-wise arranging, faith was subjected.

The age of the daughter and the years of the woman's suffering do not deserve any serious attention. There can be no conceivable connection between the two cases, except that they both appealed to Jesus.

Jairus, one of the synagogue rulers of Capernaum had an only daughter who at the time of this narrative had just passed childhood, and reached the period when Jewish law declared a woman of age. Although Matthew speaks of her as dead at the time of Jairus' application to Jesus, Mark and Luke describe her as on the point of death, or, literally, "at the last breath." Unless her illness had been both sudden and exceedingly rapid, which is barely possible, it is difficult to understand why her father had not on the previous day applied to Jesus, if his faith had been such as is generally supposed. But, if his faith had been only general, and scarcely formed, we can account more easily for the delay. It was only in the hour of supreme need, when his child lay dying, that he resorted to Jesus. There was need to perfect such faith, in one case it was perseverance of assurance that was needed, while in the other case it was energy of trustfulness. One was accomplished through the delay caused by the application of the woman, the other by the intervention of death during the interval.

There was nothing unnatural or un-Jewish in the application of this ruler to Jesus. He must have known of the healing of the son of the court-official, and of the servant of the centurion, either there or in the immediate neighborhood--as it was said, by the mere word of Christ. For there had been no imposition of silence in regard to them, even had such been possible. Yet in both cases the recovery might be ascribed by some to coincidence, by others to answer of prayer. Perhaps this may help us to understand one of the reasons for the prohibition of telling what had been done by Jesus, while in other instances silence was not enjoined. Of course, there were occasions--such as the raising of the young man at Nain and of Lazarus--when the miracles of Jesus was done so publicly, that a command of this kind would have been impossible. In other cases there was a line of demarcation, that silence was not enjoined when a result was achieved which, according to the notions of the time, might have been attributed to other than Divine Power, while in the latter case publicity was (whenever possible) forbidden. The reasons for this was that Christ's miracles were intended to aid, and not to supercede faith; they were directed to the person and teaching of Christ, as that which proved the benefit to be real and Divine, and not to excite the carnal Jewish expectations of the people, but to lead in humble discipleship to the feet of Jesus. If only those were made known which would not necessarily imply Divine Power (according to Jewish notions), then would not only the distraction and tumult of popular excitement be avoided, but in each case faith in the Person of Christ would still be required if the miracles were received as evidence of his Divine claims. This need of faith was the main point.

In view of his child's imminent death and with the knowledge he had of the "mighty deeds" commonly reported of Jesus, Jairus should have applied to Him, can the less surprise us, when we remember how often Jesus must, with consent and by invitation of this ruler, have spoken in the synagogue; and what irresistible impression His words had made. It is not necessary to suppose that Jairus was among those elders of the Jews

who interceded for the centurion; the form of the present request seems opposed to it. But after all, there was nothing in what he said which a Jew in those days might not have spoken to a Rabbi, who was regarded as Jesus must have been by all in Capernaum who disbelieved the horrible charge which the Judean Pharisees had just raised a short while back. The confidence in the result, expressed by the father in the accounts of Mark and Matthew is not mentioned by Luke. Perhaps the language of an Eastern person, should not be taken in its strict literality as indicating actual conviction on the part of Jairus, that the laying on of Christ's hands would certainly restore the maiden.

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4. Read Mark 5:25-34 in its entirety one time.
(1) No reference
5. Read Mark 5:25-33
(1) No reference
6. Read Mark 5:34
(1) Luke 7:30

Mark 5:25-34

- 25 There was a woman afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years.
- 26 She had suffered greatly at the hands of many doctors and had spent all that she had. Yet she was not helped but only grew worse.
- 27 She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak.
- 28 She said, "If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured."
- 29 Immediately her flow of blood dried up. She felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.
- 30 Jesus, aware at once that power had gone out from him, turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who has touched my clothes?"
- 31 But his disciples said to him, "You see how the crowd is pressing upon you, and yet you ask, 'Who touched me?'"
- 32 And he looked around to see who had done it.
- 33 The woman, realizing what had happened to her, approached in fear and trembling. She fell down before Jesus and told him the whole truth.
- 34 He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction."

Verse 25:

[a woman afflicted with hemorrhages](#) -- A uterine issue of blood made her ceremonially defiled (Leviticus 15:19, 25). (JBC)

Verses 25-26:

"A flow of blood for twelve years" was presumably a chronic hemorrhage, debilitating, embarrassing, and in this case impoverishing and discouraging (verse 26). The woman's faith (verse 34) was a testimony not only to her continued hope of recovery,

but also to the already widespread fame of Jesus the healer. The primitive methods of local “physicians” had been to no avail, which is no wonder, considering the remedies used at that time. (IB)

Verse 28:

I shall be cured -- The woman’s demeanor, as that of Jairus, is presented as an example of access to Christ in faith. (JBC)

Verses 27-30:

Healing by touch has been known in all ages. There are parallels in Jewish and Hellenistic literature, as well as in other parts of the NT. The emperor Hadrian is said to have been cured of a fever when touched by an aged blind man--who at the same time recovered his sight. Even the garment of a holy man could convey healing power (cf. 6:56; Acts 19:12). That the woman “felt in her body that was healed” was natural; that Jesus also knew that “power had gone forth from him” may be an inference of the narrator though we are scarcely in a position to define the psychological conditions which such cures take place. Some modern healers maintain that they can feel a power flowing through, rather than from, their hands or bodies when they touch their patients, although the old Greek commentators insisted that the power in this case was not physical. (IB)

Verse 30:

power -- Jesus is described as possessing an almost magical healing power that operates automatically upon contact with him. Accordingly the following verses correct a possible misunderstanding and show that faith is a necessary disposition, at least in order for the miracle to effect the deeper saving reality it symbolizes. (JBC)

Verse 33:

in fear and trembling -- Found elsewhere only when used by Paul to describe specifically Christian sentiments (I Corinthians 2:3; II Corinthians 7:15; Ephesians 6:5; Philippians 2:12). (JBC)

Verse 34:

has saved -- Or, “has cured you;” “has brought you salvation.”
be cured of your affliction -- *Mastix* (disease; cf. 3:10; 5:29; Luke 7:21) means literally “a scourge” or “whip” and suggests that the disease was regarded as a punishment for sin (Psalm 38:11; II Macabees 7:37; cf. Mark 1:30). (JBC)

Jesus’ insistence that the woman’s own “faith” had healed her is significant. A mere wonder worker would have taken credit for the cure. Not that he held any modern idea of the psychological or auto suggestive power of faith; instead, faith was the necessary condition of healing, which came from God (as in verse 19). For Mark the cure was further evidence of the power of Jesus as “Son of God”, though the usual conclusion to such miracle stories, stressing the impression made upon the witnesses, is lacking in this instance. Although pagan and even Jewish parallels to these great miracle stories are not lacking, there is a difference here: the form is similar, but these stories have a purely religious significance, and the impress of Jesus’ character and outlook is upon them, surviving even in the broad, popular, novelistic telling of the story. (IB)

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7. Read Luke 8:43-48 in its entirety one time.
 - (1) No reference

8. Read Luke 8:43-45
(1) No reference

9. Read Luke 8:46
(1) Luke 6:19

10. Read Luke 8:47
(1) No reference

11. Read Luke 8:48
(1) Luke 7:50 (3) Luke 18:42
(2) Luke 17:19

Luke 8:43-48

- 43 And a woman afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years, who (had spent her
whole livelihood on doctors and) was unable to be cured by anyone,
44 came up behind him and touched the tassel on his cloak. Immediately her bleeding
stopped.
45 Jesus then asked, "Who touched me?" While all were denying it, Peter said,
"Master, the crowds are pushing and pressing in upon you."
46 But Jesus said, "Someone has touched me; for I know that power has gone out
from me."
47 When the woman realized that she had not escaped notice, she came forward
trembling. Falling down before him, she explained in the presence of all the
people why she had touched him and how she had been healed immediately.
48 He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Verse 43:

Some manuscripts omit the brusque remarks about physicians. (JBC)

Verses 43-44:

The affliction was a continuous uterine discharge. The woman is named "Bernice" in chapter 7 of the Greek manuscript of The Acts of Pilate, and "Veronica" in the Latin versions. "And who had suffered much under many physicians ... and was no better but rather grew worse" are comments in the Marcan source (5:26) which Luke has suppressed. This has often been cited as evidence that the author of Luke-Acts was "the beloved physician" of Colossians 4:14--his professional pride had been touched--but it may be nothing more than a simple abbreviation. "Which had spent all her living upon physicians" in some versions but has been placed in the margin in another version. In even other versions, it does not occur at all. According to Mark, the sick woman touched Jesus' "garment." Matthew and Luke are more explicit. It was the "fringe" that she "touched." A "sacred tassel" was tied by a blue thread to each of the four corners of the outer garment (Numbers 15:38-39; Deuteronomy 22:12)--a cloak that served as clothing by day and as a blanket at night. Such tassels were intended to remind Israelites of their obligations to the Law, and are still affixed to the prayer shawl worn by orthodox Jews. The loose end of the cloak would have hung over Jesus' left shoulder, and the "sacred tassel" attached to it could have been touched by one who "came up behind him"--

perhaps because she was ceremonially unclean. For other references by Luke to cure by contact see Acts 19:12. (IB)

Verse 44:

tassel on his cloak -- Required on the four corners of men's garments (Numbers 15:37-41; Deuteronomy 22:12). Jesus obeys the Law, but he also informs the woman that she was cured because of her faith, her confident dependence upon God. Jesus also went beyond the Law in allowing an unclean woman (Leviticus 15:25-27) to touch him, and later in touching a dead body himself (Numbers 19:11). (JBC)

Verse 45:

In Luke, Peter is the spokesman. The words, as recorded here, are much more deferential than the impetuous reply in Mark. (JBC)

Verses 45-46:

According to Mark, the "disciples" answered Jesus' question with a brusque protest, but Luke makes Peter their respectful spokesman. "And those who were with him" is omitted in some versions, and the authenticity of the phrase is therefore open to question. "I perceive that power has gone forth from me" is a direct statement in Luke but only an inference in Mark. Perhaps the original narrative explained the cure "by faith" rather than by magic (verse 48). (IB)

Verses 47-48:

"When the woman saw that she was not hidden", for Mark's "knowing what had been done to her." The confession attests the miracle. Its public nature, and the fact that the woman had been healed "immediately," are stressed in Luke. "Go in peace" is a Semitic benediction (e.g. I Samuel 1:17; 29:7). (IB)

12. Read Matthew 9:20-22 in its entirety one time.

(1) No reference

13. Read Matthew 9:20

(1) No reference

14. Read Matthew 9:21

(1) Numbers 15:37

(2) Matthew 14:36

15. Read Matthew 9:22

(1) No reference

Matthew 9:20-22

20 A woman suffering hemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the tassel on his cloak.

21 She said to herself, "If only I can touch his cloak, I shall be cured."

22 Jesus turned around and saw her, and said, "Courage, daughter! Your faith has saved you." And from that hour the woman was cured.

Overview from JBC:

In Matthew, the inserted story of the woman with a hemorrhage is even more abbreviated than is the story concerning Jairus' daughter. The conception of the

miraculous power of Jesus is profoundly modified by the omission of Mark 5:29-33. In Mark the power is conceived as a kind of invisible but palpable substance that flowed from Jesus by contact, and is effective even when he is touched without his knowledge. But Matthew does not conceive power as an emanation; it is operative at the word of Jesus, and the woman is cured not by touching his garment but by his word. Of Mark's narrative Matthew preserves the faith that is manifested in her assurance that a touch of Jesus' garment is sufficient to effect a cure. The observant Jew wore a tassel at each of the four corners of his cloak; it was the tassel, not the "fringe," the woman touched.

Overview from IB:

It has often been suggested that Mark, or some earlier narrative, has combined the two miracle stories artistically so as to indicate the passage of some time between the coming of the synagogue official and Jesus' entrance into the house; but it is not difficult to assume that the two incidents occurred just as Mark tells them. The narrative of the ruler's daughter may be compared with the stories told about Elijah (I Kings 17:17-24), Elisha (II Kings 4:17-37), and Peter (Acts 9:36-42); and there are also Jewish and pagan parallels.

Verse 20:

"A woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage" would be unclean, and perhaps this is why she "came up behind him." Her condition could have had a psychological basis. She may have "touched the hem", seam, or corner of his outer garment, or "the fringe", probably the tassel which every Jew wore (Numbers 15:38-41; Deuteronomy 22:12). (IB)

Verse 22:

Her "faith" is praised, but it is not necessary to suppose that Jesus means, "Faith, rather than touching me, has healed you." The evangelists probably assume that God's healing power was always present in Jesus (Luke 8:46); but it is made available only when faith is present. Certainly the Gospels never despise physical means such as touching. (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

When Jesus followed the official to his house, the multitude "thronging him" in eager curiosity, another approached him from out of the crowd, whose inner history was far different from that of Jairus. The disease from which this woman had suffered for twelve years would render her Levitically unclean. In the Talmud, and in those cases where astringents or tonics are prescribed for women, it is ordered that, while the woman is taking the remedy she is to be addressed in the words: "Arise from thy flux." Jesus neither used remedies, nor spoke the word "arise" to her who had come "from behind him" to touch for her healing "the fringe of his outer garment."

This is almost the only occasion on which we can obtain a glimpse of Jesus' outward appearance and manner of dress. It might enable us to form an accurate conception of it, as is offered by a knowledge of the dress of the ancient Hebrews. The rabbis laid it down as a rule, that the learned ought to be most careful in their dress. It was a disgrace if a scholar walked abroad with clouted shoes; to wear dirty clothes deserved death; for the glory of God was man, and the glory of man was his dress. This held especially true of the rabbi, whose appearance might otherwise reflect on the theological profession. It was the general rule to eat and drink below a man's means, but

to dress and lodge above them. In these four things a man's character might be learned: at his cups, in money matters, when he was angry, and by his ragged dress. Accordingly, the rabbis were accustomed to wear such dress by which they might be distinguished.

In regard to the covering of the head, it was deemed a mark of disrespect to walk abroad, or to pass a person, with bared head. The ordinary covering of the head was a kerchief twisted into a turban which might also be worn around the neck. A kind of hat was also in use, either of light material or felt.

A discussion might be helpful concerning what commonly constituted the dress of the body. First came the under-garment which the sages wore down to the feet. This under-garment lay close to the body, and had no other opening than that around the neck and for the arms. At the bottom it had a kind of hem. To possess only one such inner garment was a mark of poverty. The inner garment might be almost any material, even leather, although it was generally of wool or flax. It was sleeved, close-fitting, reaching to the ankles, and was fastened around the loins, or just under the breast, by a girdle.

The upper garment was worn over the under-garment. Although there were several forms of the upper garment, the kind Jesus wore would most probably have been the which provided, on its four borders with the so-called "fringes." These were attached to the four corners of the outer dress, in supposed fulfillment of the command in Numbers 15:38-41 and Deuteronomy 22:12.

We can form an approximate idea of the outward appearance of Jesus on that morning among the throng at Capernaum. We may safely assume he would go about in the ordinary dress worn by the Jewish teachers of Galilee, and not that of the ostentatious dress of the Pharisaic party. His head-gear would probably be that of the turban, which seems to have served as a covering for the head, and which descended over the back of the head and shoulders. His feet were probably shod with sandals. His upper garment was probably close-fitting, and descended to His feet, since it was not only so worn by teachers, but was regarded as absolutely necessary for any one who would publicly read or "Targum" the Scriptures, or exercise any function within the synagogue. This inner garment was without seam, woven from the top throughout. Around the middle it would be fastened with a girdle. Over the inner garment, he would most probably wear the square outer garment with the customary fringes of four long white threads with one of hyacinth knotted together on each of the four corners. It is doubtful that Jesus wore phylacteries, either on the forehead, or on the arm since he later denounced such a practice. There was certainly no demand for them in the Holy Scriptures, and only Pharisee externalism could represent their use as fulfilling the import of Exodus 13:9, 16 and Deuteronomy 6:8 and 11:18. The admission that neither the officiating priests, nor the representatives of the people, wore them in the temple, seems to imply that this practice was not quite universal.

We later read in John that the four soldiers who crucified Jesus made division of the riches of Jesus' poverty, taking each one part of his dress while the fifth article of dress was divided by lot. The four pieces of dress to be divided would be the head-gear, the more sandals, the long girdle, and the outer garment which would all be of about equal value. The fifth, undivided, and comparatively most expensive garment, would be that which was the inner garment.

This Jewish woman, "having heard the things concerning Jesus" with her

imperfect knowledge, and in the weakness of her strong faith, thought that if she only touched his garment she would be made whole. It is with assurance that we can say that the Lord cannot be touched by disease and misery, without healing coming from Him, for he is the God-Man. He is also the loving, pitying Savior who does not turn from out weakness in the manifestation of our faith, even as he did not turn from hers who touched his garment for her healing.

In our minds, we can picture her as mingling with those who thronged and pressed upon Jesus, while she put forth her hand and touched the border of his garment, probably the long white tassel that hung down on one of the four corners of his dress. We can understand how her illness (which not only rendered her Levitically defiling, but also would have made her public speech so difficult to explain her need) would have caused her to think of him with the knowledge that his word, spoken at a distance, had brought healing, might also heal her with only a touch of his garment. Hers was a strong faith since she expected help where all human help, so long and earnestly sought, had so signally failed. It was also strong faith to expect that even contact with Him, the bare touch of his garment, would carry such Divine Power as to make her whole. It was in this very strength of her faith that her weakness lay. She believed so much in Him that she felt personal appeal was not needed. There were hindrances in her unclean state that the request for His help was not available. Believing so much in Him, she deemed it sufficient to touch, not Himself, but that which in itself had no power nor value, except that it was in contact with His Divine Person. It is here that her faith was beset by a double danger. In its excess it might degenerate into superstition. It was not the garments which touched His Sacred Body, nor even that Body, but Himself which brought healing. Then there was the danger of losing sight of that which is necessary to faith: personal application to, and personal contact, with Christ.

Jesus did not disappoint her faith for the weakness of its manifestation. To have disappointed her faith, which was born of such high thoughts of Him, would have been to deny Himself. It is very significant that while He did not disappoint her faith, He did correct the error of its direction and manifestation. It was to this that his subsequent bearing toward her was directed. No sooner had she touched the border of his garment than “she knew in the body that she was healed of her scourge.” No sooner, had she so touched the border of his garment that He also knew, “perceived in Himself,” what had taken place; the foregoing of the Power that is from out of Him.

There is no reason to overweight and mar the narrative by adding what is not conveyed in the text. There is nothing in the language of Mark nor of Luke to oblige us to conclude that this outpouring of Power, which He perceived in Himself, had been through an act, of the full meaning of which Christ was unconscious--in other words, he was ignorant of the person, who, and the reasons why, she had touched him. In short, “the outgoing of the power that is out of him” was neither unconscious nor unwilling on his part. It was caused by her faith, not by her touch. “Thy faith has made thee well.” The question of Jesus could not have been misleading, when “straightway he turned about in the crowd and said ‘Who touched my garments?’” That he knew who had done it, and he only wished, through self-confession, to bring her to clearness in the exercise of her faith, appears from what is immediately added: “And he looked around about” not to see who had done it, but “to see her that had done this thing.” And as his look of unspoken

appeal was at last fixed on her alone in all that crowd which was thronging and pressing upon him, "the woman saw that she was not hid", and she came forward to make full confession. Thus, while in his mercy he had borne with her weakness, and in his faithfulness had not disappointed her faith, its double error was also corrected. She learned that it was not from the garment, but from the Savior that the Power proceeded; she also learned that it was not the touch of it, but the faith in him, that made her whole--and such faith must ever be of personal dealing with Him. Then he spoke to her the word of double help and assurance: "Thy faith has made thee whole--go forth into peace, and be healed of thy scourge."

As brief as this record of its occurrence is, it must have caused considerable delay in the progress of our Lord to the house of Jairus. For in the interval, the maiden, who had been in the grips of death when her father went to seek help of Jesus, had not only died, but the house of mourning was already filled with relatives, hired mourners, wailing women and musicians, in preparation for the funeral.

16. Read Mark 5:35-43 in its entirety one time.

(1) No reference

17. Read Mark 5:35-38

(1) No reference

18. Read Mark 5:39-40

(1) Acts 9:40

19. Read Mark 5:41-43

(1) No reference

Mark 5:35-43

35 While he was still speaking, people from the synagogue official's house arrived and said, "Your daughter has died; why trouble the teacher any longer?"

36 Disregarding the message that was reported, Jesus said to the synagogue official, "Do not be afraid; just have faith."

37 He did not allow anyone to accompany him inside except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James.

38 When they arrived at the house of the synagogue official, he caught sight of a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly.

39 So he went in and said to them, "Why this commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep."

40 And they ridiculed him. Then he put them all out. He took along the child's father and mother and those who were with him and entered the room where the child was.

41 He took the child by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise!"

42 The girl, a child of twelve, arose immediately and walked around. (At that) they were utterly astounded.

43 He gave strict orders that no one should know this and said that she should be given something to eat.

Verse 35:

Your daughter has died -- This news raises the question of Jairus' faith not only in Jesus' healing power (5:23), but in his power to raise the dead. (JBC)

why trouble the teacher -- The messengers' words betray their own lack of faith. (JBC)

Verses 35-37:

"While he was still speaking"--if the telescoping of the two stories is Mark's work, it is done with great dramatic effect. Some writers have thought that the girl lay in a state of coma (verse 39), but Mark surely assumed that she was really "dead." "Jesus heard" may mean "overheard," or even "ignoring." The rest of the verse implies that he overheard them; Jesus overhears them, and proceeds to reassure the father (cf. 9:23) with his characteristic insistence upon faith. "Do not fear, only believe." The three disciples named in verse 37 were the most intimate of Jesus' disciples, according to Mark (cf. 9:2). (IB)

Verse 37:

Peter, James, and John -- The presence of the close disciples is intentionally stressed by Mark (cf. 5:21); it is largely for their instruction that Jesus performs the miracles of 4:35-5:43. (JBC)

Verse 38:

commotion, people weeping and wailing -- Jesus pays no heed to such lamentation but proceeds to give a lesson, by word and deed, on the true meaning of death. (JBC)

Verses 38-39:

The mourners, possibly some of them professional, had begun their wailing and lamentation as soon as it was apparent that the girl had died. "Not dead but sleeping" may convey to a modern reader the impression that Jesus recognized that the girl was only apparently dead, and that he roused her from her cataleptic state. This is a possible interpretation of the incident, but Mark is not portraying Jesus as an expert diagnostician; Jesus speaks here, and in verse 36, without having seen the child. This restoration from death is the climax of the present series of miracles, somewhat as John makes the resurrection of Lazarus a climax of his series of seven great "signs." (IB)

Verse 39:

asleep -- It is impossible to decide whether Jesus means this literally or theologically (i.e., her death is only a sleep). The paschal outlook of the Gospel, however, makes it clear that for Mark Jesus' miracles symbolize the passage from death (bondage to sin and the devil) to new life. (JBC)

Verse 40:

they ridiculed him -- In Acts 17:32 Paul's mention of the resurrection of the dead meets similar scorn. (JBC)

Verse 41:

Talitha kokum -- As elsewhere (3:17; 7:11, 34; 11:9-10; 14:36; 15:22, 34) Mark preserves the Hebrew or Aram words and translates them for his Gentile readers. (JBC)

Verses 41-42:

The retention of the Aramaic words which Jesus used can scarcely be due to belief that the formula itself was effective (as some have held), but it does indicate, like other Aramaic phrases in Mark (e.g., 7:34), that the story originally circulated in that language. Some of the manuscripts have gone sadly astray in copying these foreign words, but the sense is clear enough, and is as Mark has rendered it. There is no connection between the statement that the girl was "twelve years old" and that the woman in verse 25 had been ill for twelve years--as if she were the child's mother. Such romantic conjectures are quite outside Mark's purpose. "Astonished with a great astonishment" is literal and striking, but "they were overcome with amazement" is preferable. (IB)

Verse 42:

[She] **arose immediately** -- The Greek verb used here is also used of Christ's resurrection (Mark 8:31; 9:9, 31; 10:34; Acts 1:22; 2:24, 31, 32; 4:33; 10:41; 13:33, 34; 17:3:31; Romans 1:4). (JBC)

They were utterly astounded -- Or, "they were beside themselves with amazement". The expressions of amazement are unusually strong here; significantly, the same verb and its noun are used here as in 3:21. Jesus' relatives accuse him of insanity. Thus the section 3:19b - 5:43 is held together by a "inclusion." (JBC)

Verse 43:

Almost certainly the first half of this verse is editorial. The purpose of the impossible command of silence is, in Mark's view, to safeguard the messianic secret. Verse 43b, the command to give the child food, was perfectly natural; but in the story as told--and retold by Mark--it must have been intended to prove the reality of the miracle. The dead was now living and could take food. (IB)

20. Read Luke 8:49-56
(1) No reference

Luke 8:49-56

- 49 While he was still speaking, someone from the synagogue official's house arrived and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the teacher any longer."
50 On hearing this, Jesus answered him, "Do not be afraid; just have faith and she will be saved."
51 When he arrived at the house he allowed no one to enter with him except Peter and John and James, and the child's father and mother.
52 16 All were weeping and mourning for her, when he said, "Do not weep any longer, for she is not dead, but sleeping."
53 And they ridiculed him, because they knew that she was dead.
54 But he took her by the hand and called to her, "Child, arise!"
55 Her breath returned and she immediately arose. He then directed that she should be given something to eat.
56 Her parents were astounded, and he instructed them to tell no one what had happened.

Verse 49:

Someone ... arrived -- The only time Luke has preserved the historic present tense from the Marcan sections in his Gospel. (JBC)

The framework is resumed. According to one translation of the verb that occurs in Mark, Jesus “ignored” the report that the girl had died. Luke understood it to mean “overheard.” “Him” is ambiguous but must refer to Jairus. “And she shall be well” adds nothing to the terse assurance in Mark. (IB)

Verse 50:

she will be saved -- This phrase is found only in Luke (cf. 8:12, 36). (JBC)

Verses 51-54:

Luke has noticeably shortened Mark’s description, so that a careful reconstruction of the episode is difficult from his account. (JBC)

Verse 51:

In Mark, Jesus dismisses the crowd before the house is reached; in Luke, at the house door. “Peter, and John, and James” are mentioned in this order in the better manuscripts. The same group of intimates witnesses the Transfiguration; according to Mark, also the agony in Gethsemane (Mark 14:33). (IB)

Verses 52-55:

Mark presupposes a public wake, with professional mourners in attendance. This is probably Luke’s assumption also, although he has abbreviated his source to the point of obscurity. Interpreters often rationalize this miracle. The bystanders thought the child was dead but Jesus knew better. He diagnosed her apparent death as coma. What seemed to others to be a miracle was merely a natural recovery. But Mark and Luke entertained no such notion. They understood the story to describe an act of resurrection. When Jesus said “she is not dead but sleeping,” he was not disputing appearances. According to Mark, he had not yet entered the death chamber. He meant that the child’s death was not irrevocable. But his hearers took him literally (cf. John 11:11-13) and “laughed at him.” Jesus confounded their incredulity by a miracle. The child’s immediate response to his command was its demonstration and his direction “that something should be given her to eat” was convincing evidence that he dead had come back to life (cf. 24:41-43). (IB)

Verse 54:

Luke omits the Greek form of the Aramaic *talitha kokum* of Mark’s Gospel. (JBC)

Verse 56:

tell no one -- For the first time, Luke includes the “Messianic Secret.” which is found so frequently in Mark; he usually concludes with a public manifestation and praise (5:17ff.; 7:16f.; 8:38f.). (JBC)

The amazement of the parents is the miracle’s final attestation. The injunction “to tell no one what had happened” is taken over from Mark, where it is related to the editorial view that Jesus wished to keep his messianic dignity a secret. (IB)

Luke may have had this gospel narrative in mind when he told the story about Peter’s raising of Tabitha (Acts 9:36-42). (IB)

* * * * *

21. Read Matthew 9:23-26
(1) No reference

Matthew 9:23-26

- 23 When Jesus arrived at the official's house and saw the flute players and the crowd

who were making a commotion,
24 he said, "Go away! The girl is not dead but sleeping." And they ridiculed him.
25 When the crowd was put out, he came and took her by the hand, and the little girl
arose.
26 And news of this spread throughout all that land.

Matthew represents the child as already dead, and the element of suspense becomes superfluous (cf. Mark 5:23, 35-36). The musicians and the crowd in the house were professional mourners. (JBC)

Verse 23:

The girl is not dead -- The sleep from which Jesus awakens is death. The raising itself is reduced by Matthew to the bare essentials, and the allusion to "the Messianic Secret" (Mark 5:43) is, like most such allusions in Mark, omitted. The rewriting of the story in Matthew heightens the wonder of the incident. Where Mark has a healing story, Matthew has a resurrection story. This freedom, which to the modern reader may seem unwarranted, rises from the Gospel conception of the miracles. They are, as we have seen, the response of the power of Jesus to faith; and the release of the power corresponds in intensity to the intensity of the faith. The comparison of Matthew and Mark here is a good illustration of the type of development that the stories of the deeds of Jesus experienced in the traditions of the primitive church. (JBC)

The Talmud states that for a funeral "even the poorest in Israel should hire not less than two flutes and one wailing woman." (IB)

Verse 24:

Sleep is a common euphemism for death among Jews as well as Christians, but here the thought is that this death is only temporary. The same play on the idea is found in John 11:11-15. (IB)

Verse 25:

"The crowd" are "put outside" as in the stories of Elijah, Elisha, and Peter and Tabitha. Similar procedure in pagan parallels is usually taken to mean that unbelievers must not be allowed to see the miracle. The rabbis held that raising the dead was God's prerogative, and that it could take place through the instrumentality of righteous men. To all appearance the girl was dead; on the other hand, medicine knows of cataleptic states which can be mistaken for death. Since we have no way of investigating the event, we shall do well to avoid overconfident theorizing. (IB)

The structure of this part of Matthew also may be related to the theological development of the miracle. The three miracles related in this context touch death, blindness, and the loss of speech and hearing. The intention to present a comprehensive summary of the saving power of Jesus is apparent. (JBC)

Summary from LToJC:

Brief as the record of the occurrence of the woman being healed from touching the hem of Jesus' garment, it must have caused considerable delay in the progress of our Lord to the house of Jairus. For in the interval the girl, who had been at the last gasp when her father went to entreat the help of Jesus, had not only died, but the house of mourning was already filled with relatives, hired mourners, wailing women, and musicians in preparation for the funeral. No outcome of God's Providence is of chance, but each is

designed. The circumstances, which in their concurrence make up an event, may all be of natural occurrence, but their conjunction is of Divine ordering and to a higher purpose, and this constitutes Divine Providence. It was in the interval of this delay that the messengers came, who informed Jairus of the actual death of his child. Jesus overheard it, as they whispered to the ruler not to trouble the Rabbi any further, but He heeded it not, except so far as it affected the father. The emphatic admonition not to fear, only to believe, gives us an insight into the threatening failure of the ruler's faith; perhaps, also, into the motive which prompted the delay of Christ. The utmost need, which would henceforth require the utmost faith on the part of Jairus had not come. But into that, which was to pass within the house, no stranger must intrude. Even of the Apostles only those, who now for the first time, became, and henceforth continued, the innermost circle, might witness, without present danger to themselves or others, what was about to take place. How Jesus dismissed the multitude, or otherwise kept them at bay, or even where he parted from all his disciples, except for Peter, James, and John, does not clearly appear, and indeed, it is of no importance. He may have left the nine apostles with the people, or outside the house, or parted from them in the courtyard of Jairus' house before he entered the inner apartments.

Within the house, the tumult of weeping, the wail of the mourners, real or hired, and the melancholy sound of the mourning flutes--sad, preparation for, and pageantry of, an Eastern funeral--broke with dismal discord on the majestic calm of assured victory over death, with which Jesus had entered the house of mourning. But even so He would tell it to them, as often in like circumstances he tells it to us, that the girl was not dead, but only sleeping. The Rabbis also frequently have the expression "to sleep" when the sleep is overpowering and oppressive, instead of "to die." It may well be that Jesus made use of this Jewish word of double meaning, "the child sleeps." And they understood Him well in their own way, yet they understood him not at all.

As so many of those who now hear this word, they to whom it was then spoken, in their coarse realism, laughed Him to scorn. For did they not know that she had actually died, even before the messengers had been dispatched to prevent the needless trouble of His coming? Yet even this their scorn served a higher purpose. For it showed two things: that to the certain belief of those in the house that the maiden was really dead, and that the Gospel writers regarded the raising of the dead as not only beyond the ordinary range of Messianic activity, but as something miraculous even among the miracles of Christ. This also is evidential, at least so far as to prove that the writers recorded the event not lightly, but with full knowledge of the demand which it makes on our faith.

The first thing to be done by Christ was to "put out" the mourners, whose proper place this house no longer was, and who by their conduct had proved themselves unfit to be witnesses of Christ's great manifestation. The impression which the narrative leaves on the mind is, that all this while the father of the girl was dumbfounded, passive, rather than active in the matter. The great fear, which had come upon him when the messengers apprised him of his only child's death, seemed still to numb his faith. He followed Christ without taking any part in what happened; he witnessed the pageantry or the approaching obsequies in his house without interfering; he heard the scorn which Christ's majestic declaration of the victory over death provoked, without checking it. The fire of his faith

was that of “dimly burning flax.” But “Jesus will not quench” it.

He now led the father and the mother into the chamber where the dead girl lay, followed by the three Apostles, witnesses of His chiefest working and of His utmost earthly glory, but also of His inmost sufferings. Without doubt or hesitation, He took her by the hand and spoke only these two words: “Child arise!” And immediately the girl arose. But the great astonishment which came upon them, as well as the demand that no man should know it, are further evidence, if such were required, how little their faith had been prepared for that which in its weakness was granted to it. And thus Jesus, as He had formerly connected in the woman that weakness of faith which came through very excess, so now in the ruler of the synagogue the weakness which was by failure.

How Jesus conveyed Himself away, whether through another entrance into the house, or by “the road of roofs,” we are not told. But assuredly, He must have avoided the multitude. Presently we find him far from Capernaum. Probably he had left it immediately upon leaving the house of Jairus. But what of that multitude? The tidings must have speedily reached them, that the daughter of the synagogue-ruler was not dead. Yet it had been demanded of them that none should be informed concerning how it had come to pass that she lived. They were then with this intended mystery before them. She was not dead; thus much was certain. The Christ, had, before leaving that chamber, given the command that food be brought the child, and, as at that direction must have been carried out by one of the attendants, this would become immediately known to all that household. Had she then not really died, but only been sleeping? Here then was another parable of twofold different bearings: to them that had hearts to understand, and to them who understood not. In any case, their former scorn had been misplaced; in any case, the Teacher of Nazareth was far other than all the Rabbis. In what Name, and by what Power, did He come and act? Who was He really? Had they but known of the word spoken by Jesus: “Child Arise”, and how these two words had burst open the doors of death. Yet it would have only ended in utter excitement and complete misunderstanding, to the final impossibility of the carrying out of Christ’s mission. For, the full as well as the true knowledge that He was the Son of God, could only come after His contest and suffering. And our faith also in Him is first in the suffering servant, and then of the Son of God. Thus was it also from the first. It was through what He did for them that they learned who He was. Had it been otherwise, the full blaze of the Sun’s glory would have so dazzled them, that they could not have seen the Cross.

One might ask--Was the girl really dead, or only sleeping? There is another question that is connected with this one. Was the healing of the woman who touched the hem of Christ’s garment miraculous, or only caused by the influence of the mind over the body, such as is not infrequently witnessed, and is the explanation for modern so called miraculous healings, where only superstition perceives supernatural agency? These very words “influence of mind over body,” with which we are so familiar, are they not, so to speak, symbolic and typical? Do they not, in fact, point to the possibility, and beyond it, to the fact of such influence of the God-Man, of the command which he wielded over the body? May not the command of the soul over the body be part of unfallen man’s original inheritance which is most fully realized in the Perfect Man, Jesus Christ--the God-Man---, to whom has been given the absolute rule of all things, and who has it in virtue of His nature? These are only dim feelings after possible higher truths.

No one who carefully reads this history can doubt, that the Evangelists, at least, viewed this healing as a real miracle, and intended to tell it as such. Even the statement of Christ, that by the forthgoing of Power He knew the moment when the woman touched the hem of His garment, would render impossible the view of certain critics that the cure was the effect of natural causes--expectation acting through the imagination on the nervous system, and so producing the physical results. But even so, and while these writers reiterate certain old theories propounded by others, and used by others often derived from the ancient armory of our own Deists, they admit being so impressed with the "simple," "natural," and "life-life" cast of the narrative, that they contend for its historic truth. The critics denial of a miracle does not rest on any historical foundation. We can understand, how a legend could gather around historical facts and embellish them, but not how a narrative so entirely without precedent in the OT, and so opposed, not only to common Messianic expectation, but to Jewish thought, could have been invented to glorify the Jewish Messiah.

As regards the restoration of life of Jairus' daughter, there is like difference in the negative school of critics. One party insists that the girl only seemed, but was not really dead, a view which is open also to this objection--it is manifestly impossible by such devices to account for the raising of the young man at Nain, or that of Lazarus. Other critics treat the whole as a myth. The appeal to Jewish belief at that time tells, if possible, even more strongly against the hypothesis in question. It is doubtful whether Jewish theology generally ascribed to the Messiah the raising of the dead. There are isolated statements to that effect, but the majority of opinions is, that God would Himself raise the dead. But even those passages in which it is attributed to the Messiah tell against the assertions of the critics. For, the resurrection to which they refer is that "of all the dead" (whether at the end of the present age, or of the world), and not of single individuals. To the latter there is not the faintest allusion in Jewish writings, and it may be safely asserted that such a dogma would have been foreign, even incongruous, to Jewish theology.

This history cannot be either explained or accounted for. It must be accepted or rejected, accordingly as we think of Christ. It did form part of the original tradition and belief of the church. It is recorded with such details of names, circumstances, time and place, as almost to court inquiry, and to render fraud almost impossible. It is recorded by all the three synoptic evangelists, and with such variations, or rather, additions, of details as only to confirm the credibility of the narrators, by showing their independence of each other. Finally, it fits into the whole history of Christ, and into this special period of it; and it sets before us the Christ and his bearing in a manner, which we instinctively feel to be in accordance with what we know and expect. It implied determined rejection of the claims of Christ, and that on the grounds, not of history, but of preconceived opinions that area hostile to the Gospel, not to see and adore in it the full manifestations of the Divine Savior of the world.

Session 20

o. THE SECOND REJECTION AT NAZARETH

Matthew 13:54-58

Mark 6:1-6

1. Read Matthew 13:54-58 in its entirety.
(1) Mark 6:1-6 (2) Luke 4:16-30
 2. Read Matthew 13:54
(1) Matthew 2:23 (3) John 7:15
(2) John 1:46
 3. Read Matthew 13:55
(1) Matthew 12:46 (3) John 6:42
(2) Matthew 27:56
 4. Read Matthew 13:56
(1) No reference
 5. Read Matthew 13:57
(1) John 4:44
- Page 1
6. Read Matthew 13:58
(1) No reference

1st Reader

Matthew 13:54-58

- 54 He came to his native place and taught the people in their synagogue. They were
astonished and said, "Where did this man get such wisdom and mighty deeds?
- 55 Is he not the carpenter's son? Is not his mother named Mary and his brothers
James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas?
- 56 Are not his sisters all with us? Where did this man get all this?"
- 57 And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without
honor except in his native place and in his own house."
- 58 And he did not work many mighty deeds there because of their lack of faith.

Comments from JBC:

In both Mark and Matthew the Nazareth episode forms a climax of the Galilean ministry and the rejection of Jesus. Matthew's revisions and omissions are significant. Jesus is called "the son of the carpenter" and not "the carpenter"; Matthew may have wished to raise Jesus above the actual practice of a trade. It is quite strange that in neither

Mark nor Matthew is the usual patronymic employed, which would be Jesus bar-Joseph; indeed, in Mark he is called the son of Mary, a designation that is extremely suggestive. It appears that in Nazareth it was known that Jesus was not the carnal son of Joseph, with all the implications that would be attached to this designation.

The incident is not only climactic in the Galilean ministry, it also summarizes the rejection of Jesus as a whole. The response of the Nazarenes was, “We know him, and therefore he cannot be anything out of the ordinary.” In a proper sense the entire Jewish community could say this. The incident illustrates the saying in 10:34-36.

Comments from IB:

Some scholars consider the story in Matthew and Mark as a “paradigm” symbolizing Jesus’ lack of success in Galilee and perhaps all Israel. This is shown by the place assigned to it by the evangelists in their framework. Certainly the early church loved to develop the theme that Jesus “was despised and rejected of men,” but there is no reason to doubt that this story is historical.

Verse 54:

“His own country” is not further specified, but it most naturally refers to Nazareth or the surrounding region. The particular word is used here only in these synoptic stories of the rejection, in John 4:44 and in Hebrews 11:14, where it refers to heaven. Mark may choose it in order to point out that “he came to his own home, and his own people received him not” (John 1:11). Anyone who was competent was allowed to teach in the “synagogue.” The preacher would ordinarily paraphrase the scripture lesson and emphasize its warnings and promises with scripture quotations or illustrate it with parables. The Mishnah contains an example of such a sermon. Matthew perhaps thought of the miracles in chapters 8-9 as “these mighty works,” but the words might refer to any miracles of which the people had heard. (IB)

Verse 55:

The kinsmen of Jesus mentioned in general in 12:46-50 are here named; it is impossible to identify them positively with others in the NT who bear these names, and the manuscripts are not uniform in the reading of the names. It is clear that they were never persons of importance in the primitive Jerusalem community. (JBC)

It would be natural in the Semitic world for a man to be called the “carpenter’s son.” Matthew would not feel any conflict between this and the idea of the Virgin Birth. He may indeed prefer this to Mark’s statement that Jesus was “the son of Mary,” which might be considered a slur on his legitimacy. Some Caesarean, Alexandrian, and Western authorities read in Mark 6:3, “Is not this the son of the carpenter and of Mary?” It has been conjectured that Mark originally read: “Is not this the son of the carpenter and brother of James ...?” since the Jewish word means one who builds with stone or wood. (IB)

Verse 57:

Where Mark says Jesus “could” not work miracles, Matthew says he “did” not; the phrase in Mark is harsh, but it is in agreement with the general conception of the Gospels of the miracle as a response to faith. The saying about the prophet who has no honor in his own country is found also in John 4:44. Mark’s note of the amazement of Jesus at the unbelief of the Nazarenes is reduced in Matthew to “because of their unbelief”; this amazement is an emotional response of Jesus of the type that Matthew

usually omits. (JBC)

“And they took offense at him.” One scholar maintains that the villagers are half inclined to believe, but do not wish to; it hurts their pride that one who grew up among them has done wonderful things that they cannot imitate. One papyri gives Jesus’ saying as follows: “A prophet is not acceptable in his own country, Nor does a physician cure those who know him.” Some regard this as the original form. (IB)

Verse 58:

As in 9:22, belief is a necessary condition for the miracle.

Summary from LToJC:

It almost seems as if the departure of Jesus from Capernaum marked a crisis in the history of that town. From henceforth it ceases to be the center of his activity, and is only occasionally, and in passing, visited. The concentration and growing power of the Pharisaic opposition, and the proximity of Herod’s residence at Tiberius would have rendered a permanent stay there impossible at this stage in our Lord’s history. Henceforth, his life is not purely missionary, but he has no certain dwelling place.

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7. Read Mark 6:1-6 in its entirety.
(1) Matthew 13:54-58
8. Read Mark 6:1-2
(1) No reference
9. Read Mark 6:3
(1) Matthew 12:46 (3) John 6:42
(2) Mark 15:40
10. Read Mark 6:4
(1) John 4:44
11. Read Mark 6:5-6
(1) No reference

Mark 6:1-6

- 1 He departed from there and came to his native place, accompanied by his disciples.
- 2 When the sabbath came he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What kind of wisdom has been given him? What mighty deeds are wrought by his hands!
- 3 Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.
- 4 Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and among his own kin and in his own house."
- 5 So he was not able to perform any mighty deed there, apart from curing a few sick

- people by laying his hands on them.
- 6 He was amazed at their lack of faith. He went around to the villages in the vicinity teaching.

Comments from IB on Mark 6:1 - Mark 9:50:

Heretofore Jesus has been represented as centering his activities in Capernaum, with a journey about Galilee (1:30) and one across the lake and back (4:5; 5:21). A new division in Mark's Gospel begins with 6:1, recounting the visit to Nazareth, another circuit of Galilee (6:6b), a journey to Bedside (6:45), the return (6:53), a visit to the region of Tyre and Sidon (7:24), the return via Decapolis (7:31), a visit to "Dalmanutha" (8:10), Bethsaida again (8:22), the villages of Caesarea Philippi (8:27), a "high mountain" (9:2, 9), and the return through Galilee (9:30) to Capernaum (9:33); after this begins (10:1) the journey to Jerusalem via Trans-Jordan and Jericho (10:46). This brief outline includes all the topographical references in Mark. That it cannot be complete is obvious, if only from a comparison with the other Gospels; but it is typical both of Mark's arrangement and of his selection of materials. Some of the localities are difficult, if not impossible, to identify. Yet the general impression is undoubtedly correct. Jesus "went about all Galilee" -- his ministry was not confined to one place. But for the most part, the present division (chapters 6-9) represents Jesus as outside Galilee proper, or rather, outside the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, following the rejection at Nazareth and the mission of the disciples. This was the famous for one scholar's famous theory of the "flight" of Jesus from his enemies, and has been taken as evidence of the "failure" of the Galilean ministry. But the basis of the theory is Mark's schematic arrangement, as another scholar has pointed out, and it may or may not be in accordance with the original facts. As we shall see, these four chapters in Mark include several blocks of material (which may be based on corresponding sources), and contain what appears to be a double tradition of events in 6:34 - 7:37 and 8:1-26.

Although Luke (4:16-30) locates the visit to Nazareth near the beginning of Jesus' ministry, his narrative presupposes a prior ministry in Capernaum (Luke 4:23), and the story as he tells it has been influenced by the present section in Mark. Luke's location and rewriting are both intended to bring out the significance of the visit to Nazareth as marking the inauguration of Jesus' public ministry, which was to extend from his home village to the "end of the earth." Jesus' visit to Nazareth is incidental to his wider journeying; Capernaum is from the outset his headquarters.

Verse 1:

his native place -- Presumably Nazareth (cf:1:9). But the original word could mean "homeland," and thus Nazareth's rejection of her native son foreshadows the final rejection by his people. (JBC)

"His own country" -- The original word was often used of a city or town, rather than "country," and usually meant birthplace. Mark, like John, shows no knowledge of the story of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. The presence of "his disciples" indicates that the purpose of his journey was evangelization, not a family visit. (IB)

Verse 2:

teach -- There is a certain similarity between this passage and 1:21-27; but whereas Jesus' first appearance in the synagogue met with enthusiasm for his teaching

and miracles, here enthusiasm yields first to skepticism (verse 3a), then to opposition (verse 3b), and finally to disbelief (verse 6a). (JBC)

Where did this man get all this? -- Questions like this punctuate Mark (1:27; 2:7; 4:41), in function of an ever-increasing disclosure of Jesus' person and mission. (JBC)

"mighty works"-- this term is used in the Synoptic Gospels for Jesus' works of exorcism and healing. John uses the word "sign," which is more appropriate to his characteristic theological view: a sign was a manifestation, almost an "epiphany" of the divine nature of the incarnate Logos. Both terms are sharply distinguished from the common expression "signs and wonders," which were mere portents or tricks of magic (cf. 8:1). (IB)

Verse 3:

the carpenter, the son of Mary -- Without any explanation, admiration changes to resentment. Mark 6:3 is the only NT text that calls Jesus "the son of Mary." It was Jewish custom to refer to a man as the son of his father [Jesus bar Joseph] (cf. Luke 3:23; 4:22; John 1:45; 6:42). Thus "son of Mary" may be intended as an insult. Considering Origen's statement that nowhere in the Gospels is Jesus spoken of as a carpenter, and the fact that the Chester Beatty papyrus and other miniscule manuscripts read "the son of the carpenter", as does Matthew 13:55, it may be that "son of Mary" is also a faulty reading (JBC)

"The carpenter, the son of Mary". This reading is probably due to later revision, under the influence of the doctrine of the virgin birth; the reading presupposed by both Matthew 13:55 and Luke 4:22 is the one actually found, in conflated form, in some Greek manuscripts, the Old Latin, Armenian, and Ethiopic versions, and Origen: "Is not this the son of the carpenter?" Even the Chester Beatty manuscript supports it. It is most improbable that if Mark originally contained the reading found KJV and RSV ("Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary"), both Matthew and Luke should have changed it to their present readings. Origen, the greatest biblical scholar of his time, says that he never saw a gospel that described Jesus as a carpenter. (IB)

Many theological theories and arguments have been advanced to explain the "brothers and sisters" of Jesus: for example, that they were really his cousins, or half brothers and half sisters--children of the aged Joseph by a former marriage--and so on. But the motive of such speculation is clear; namely, to safeguard the doctrine of the virgin birth and its later elaboration in that of the perpetual virginity of the mother of Jesus. It is better to take the words in their natural sense. Jesus was evidently a member of a fairly large family, that of the "carpenter" (possibly, "builder") Joseph. (IB)

of James -- Not one of the Twelve, probably the first bishop of Jerusalem who may have been one of the additional "apostles." The other brothers, James, Judas, and Simon are unknown. (JBC)

took offense -- By the time Mark was written the original words for "scandal" and "stumbling block" were technical terms to describe the effect of Christ's death on Israel (Romans 9:33; I Corinthians 1:23; Galatians 5:11). (JBC)

Verse 4:

A prophet is not without honor -- This saying, in a form closer to Luke 4:24, is preserved in the Coptic Gospel according to Thomas, 31; "No prophet is acceptable in his village; no physician cures those who know him." (JBC)

“A prophet ... country”--This was probably a more or less proverbial saying. An interesting variant, which some take to be original--is it echoed in Luke 4:23?--has been found in a papyrus at Oxyrhynchus: “Jesus says, A prophet is not accepted in his own home town, nor does a physician work cures upon those who know him.” But the saying may be apocryphal, like other Oxyrhynchus “logia,” and only a combination of the two sayings in Luke 4:23-24. In Mark, Jesus does not claim to be a prophet, but only compares himself to one. (IB)

Verse 5:

he was not able to perform any mighty deed there -- A perfect illustration of the latter part of the saying in verse 4. Jesus’ miraculous power was rendered ineffective by the disbelief of his countrymen. Matthew 13:58 changes “could not” to “did not.” Possibly Mark intended this “not as an indication of the impotence of Jesus in face of the disrespect of his compatriots, but as an impressive illustration... “[that] those who do not show the respect and honor which are due to the divine prophet, necessarily preclude themselves from receiving the marvelous benefits which he can bestow upon them”. (JBC)

except -- As in 12:41-44. Mark is quick to point out that not all his fellow countrymen rejected Jesus. (JBC)

Verse 6:

their lack of faith -- Like the word used for “scandal”, the original word here had also come to designate the disbelief of Israel (cf. Romans 3:3; 11:30). (JBC)

Verses 5-6:

“He could do no mighty work there” is best taken as it stands: “could” rather than “would,” in spite of Matthew’s revision. As Origen notes (on Matthew 10:19), it was because of their lack of faith, as indeed Mark suggests in verse 6. Verse 5b, “except...them”, looks like a redactional insertion, perhaps even a gloss, which interrupts the sequence. Of course it may well be that it was Mark himself who could not imagine Jesus’ power as limited by such an obstacle, and so he introduced the exceptional clause into the older narrative. Again, in verse 6b, as often in Mark, Jesus is represented as “teaching,” but without any suggestion of the content of the discourses. (IB)

Summary from JBC:

The significance of this episode is obvious; it is a dramatic and tragic end of Jesus’ Galilean ministry foreshadowing the greater rejection of Israel; at the same time, it signals a new phase of the ministry in which the Twelve will play a more active role (6:7-13, 30) as an anticipation of the mission of the apostolic church, especially toward those outside Judaism.

Summary from LToJC:

The notice in Mark’s Gospel, that his disciples followed Him, seems to connect the arrival of Jesus in “His own country” (at Nazareth) with the departure from the house of Jairus, into which He had allowed only three of His Apostles to accompany Him. The circumstance of the present visit, as well as the tone of His countrymen at this time, are entirely different from what is recorded of His former sojourn at Nazareth. The tenacious narrowness, and the prejudices, so characteristic of such a town, with its cliques and petty family-pride, all the more self-asserting that the shift would be almost imperceptible to an outsider are, of course, the same as on the former visit of Jesus. Nazareth would have

ceased to be Nazareth, had its people felt or spoken otherwise than nine or ten months before. That his fame had so grown in the interval, would only stimulate the conceit of the village-town to try, as it were, to construct the great Prophet out of its own building materials, with this additional gratification that he was thoroughly their own, and that they possessed even better materials in their Nazareth. All this is so quite according to life, that the substantial repetition of the former scene in the Synagogue, so far from surprising us, seems only natural. What surprises us is, what he marveled at: the unbelief of Nazareth, which lay at the foundation of its estimate and treatment of Jesus.

Upon their own showing their unbelief was most unwarranted. If ever men had the means of testing the claims of Jesus, the Nazarenes possessed them. True, they were ignorant of the miraculous event of His Incarnation; and we can now perceive at least one of the reasons for the mystery, which was allowed to enwrap it, as well as the higher purpose in Divine Providence of His being born, not in Nazareth, but in Bethlehem of Judea, and of the interval of time between that birth and the return of his parents from Egypt to Nazareth. Apart from prophecy, it was needful for Nazareth that Christ should have been born in Bethlehem, otherwise the "mystery of the Incarnation" must have become known. And yet it could not have been made known, alike for the sake of those most nearly concerned, and for that of those who, at that period of his history, could not have understood it; to whom it would indeed have been an absolute hindrance to belief in him. And he could not have returned to Bethlehem, where he was born, to be brought up there, without calling attention to the miracle of his birth. If, therefore, for reasons easily comprehended, the mystery of his incarnation was not to be divulged, it was needful that the Incarnate of Nazareth should be born at Bethlehem, and the infant of Bethlehem be brought up in Nazareth.

By thus withdrawing him successively from one and the other place, there was really none on earth who knew of his miraculous birth, except the virgin-mother, Joseph, Elizabeth, and probably Zechariah. The vision and guidance vouchsafed to the shepherds on that December night did not really disclose the mystery of his Incarnation. Remembering their religious notions, it would not leave on them quite the same impression as on us. It might mean much, or it might mean little, in the present: time would tell. In those lands the sand buries quickly and buries deep--preserving, indeed, but also hiding what it covers. And the sands of thirty years had buried the tale which the shepherds had brought; the wise men from the East had returned another way; the excitement which their arrival in Jerusalem and its object had caused, was long forgotten. Messianic expectations and movements were of constant recurrence: the religious atmosphere seemed changed with such elements; and the political changes and events of the day were too engrossing to allow of much attention to an isolated report which, after all, might mean little, and which certainly was of the long past. To keep up attention, there must be communication; and that was precisely what was lacking in this instance. The reign of Herod the Great was tarnished by many suspicions and murders such as those of Bethlehem. Then intervened the death of that Herod,--while the carrying of Jesus into Egypt and his non-return to Bethlehem formed a complete break in the continuity of his history. Between obscure Bethlehem in the far south, and obscure Nazareth in the far north, there was no communication such as between the towns in their own land, and they who had sought the child's life, as well as those who might have

worshiped him, must have been dead. The aged parents of the Baptist cannot have survived the thirty years which lay between the birth of Jesus and the commencement of his ministry. We have already seen reason for supposing that Joseph had died before. None, therefore, knew all except the virgin-Mother; and she would hide it the deeper in her heart, the more years passed, and she increasingly felt, as they passed that both in his early obscurity and in his later manifestation she could not penetrate into the real meaning of that mystery, with which she was so closely connected. She could not understand it; how dared she speak of it? She could not understand; nay, we can almost perceive how she might even misunderstand--not the fact, but the meaning and the claim of what had passed.

But in Nazareth they knew nothing of this; and of him only as that infant whom his parents, Joseph the carpenter and Mary, had brought with them months after they had first left Nazareth. Jewish laws and custom made it possible, that they might have been married long before. And now they only knew of this humble family, that they lived in retirement, and that sons and daughters had grown around their humble board. Of Jesus, indeed, they must have heard that He was not like others around--so quite different in all ways, as He grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. The came that strange tarrying behind on his first visit to Jerusalem, when his parents had to return to seek, and at last found him in the Temple. This, also, was only strange, though perhaps not strange in a child such as Jesus; of his own explanation of it, so full of deepest meaning, they might not have heard. If we may draw probable, though clearly not certain, inferences, after that only these three outward circumstances in the history of the family might have been generally noticed: (1) that Jesus followed the occupation of his adoptive father; (2) that Joseph had died, and (3) that the mother and "brethren" of Jesus had left Nazareth, while his "sisters" apparently continued there, being probably married to Nazarenes.

When Jesus had first left Nazareth to seek Baptism at the hands of John it could scarcely have attracted much attention. Not only did "the whole world" go after the Baptist, but, considering what was known of Jesus, his absence from, not his presence at the banks of Jordan, would have surprised the Nazarenes. Then came vague reports of his early doings, and, what probably His countrymen would much more appreciate, the accounts which the Galileans brought back from the feast of what Jesus had done at Jerusalem. His fame had preceded Him on that memorable Sabbath, when all Nazareth had thronged the Synagogue, curious to hear what the child of Nazareth would have to say, and still more eager to see what he could do. Of the charm of his words there could be no question. Both what he said and how he said it, was quite other than what they had ever listened to. The difference was not in degree, but in kind; he spoke to them of the Kingdom; yet not as on for Israel's glory, but for unspeakable comfort in the soul's deepest need. It was truly wonderful, and that not abstractedly, but as the part of "Joseph's Son." That was all they perceived. Of that which they had most come to see there was there was, and could be, no manifestation, so long as they measured the Prophet by his outward antecedents, forgetful that it was inward kinship of faith, which connected Him that brought the blessing with those who received it.

But this seeming assumption of superiority on the part of Joseph's Son was quite too much for the better classes of Nazareth. It was intolerable, that he should not only

claim equality with an Elijah or an Elisha, but place them, the burghers of Nazareth, as it were, outside the pale of Israel, below a heathen man or woman. And so, if he had not, without the show of it, proved the authority and power he possessed, they would cast him headlong over the ledge of the hill of their insulted town. And now he had come back to them, after nine or ten months, in totally different circumstances. No one could any longer question his claims, whether for good or for evil. As on the Sabbath he stood up once more in that Synagogue to teach, they were astonished. The rumor must have spread that, notwithstanding all, his own kin -- probably his "sisters," whom he might have been supposed by many to have come to visit--did not own and honor him as a prophet. Or else, had they of his own house purposely spread it, so as not to be involved in his fate? But the astonishment with which they heard him on that Sabbath was that of unbelief. They knew his supposed parentage and his brothers; His sisters were still with them; and for these many years had they known him as the carpenter, the son of the carpenter. Whence, then, had "this one", "these things", "and what the wisdom which" was "given to this one"--and these mighty works done by his hands" (Mark 6:2)?

It was, indeed, more than a difficulty--an impossibility--to account for it on their principles. There could be no delusion, no collusion, no deception. In our modern cant-phraseology, theirs might have been designated Agnosticism and philosophic doubt. But philosophic it certainly was not, any more than much that now passes, because it bears that name; at least, if, according to modern negative criticism, the inexplicable is also the unthinkable. Nor was it really doubt or Agnosticism, any more than much that now covers itself with that garb. It was, what Christ designated it,--unbelief, since the questions would have been easily answered--indeed, never have arisen--had they believed that he was the Christ. And the same alternative still holds true. If "this one" is what negative criticism declares him, which is all that it can know of him by the outside: the son of Mary, the Carpenter and Son of the carpenter of Nazareth, whose family occupied the humblest position among Galileans--then whence this wisdom which, say of it what you will, underlies all modern thinking, and these mighty works, which have molded all modern history? Whence--if He be only what you can see by the outside, and yet His be such wisdom, and such mighty deeds have been wrought by His hands. Is He only what you say and see, seeing that such results are no ways explicable on such principles; or is He not much more than this--even the Christ of God?

"And he marveled because of their unbelief." In view of their own reasoning it was most unreasonable. And equally unreasonable is modern unbelief. For, the more strongly negative criticism asserts its position as to the Person of Jesus, the more unaccountable are His Teaching and the results of His Work.

In such circumstances as at Nazareth, nothing could be done by a Christ, in contradistinction to a miracle-monger. It would have been impossible to have finally given up His own town of Nazareth without one further appeal and one further opportunity of repentance. As he had begun, so he closed this part of his Galilean Ministry, by preaching in His own synagogue of Nazareth. Save in the case of a few who were receptive, on whom he laid his hands for healing, his visit passed away without such "mighty works" as the Nazarenes had heard of. He will not return again to Nazareth. Henceforth He will make commencement of sending forth his disciples, partly to disarm prejudices of a personal character, partly to spread the Gospel-tidings farther and wider

than he alone could have carried them. For His heart compassionated the many who were ignorant and out of the way. And the harvest was near, and the harvesting was great, and it was His harvest, into which he would send forth laborers.

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p. THE MISSION OF THE TWELVE

Matthew 10:1-4

Mark 6:6b-7

Luke 9:1-2

12. Read Matthew 10:1-4 in its entirety.

(1) Mark 3:14-19

(3) Acts 1:13

(2) Luke 6:13-16

Matthew 10:1-4

- 1 Then he summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to drive them out and to cure every disease and every illness.
- 2 The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John;
- 3 Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus;
- 4 Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

Verse 1:

Matthew (with Luke) expands the conferring of power in Mark 6:7 by the addition of the power of healing diseases. This makes explicit what is implicit in Mark; for afflictions are the work of evil spirits, but the attribution to evil spirits is expressed in certain outstanding cases of damage, particularly when the mind is afflicted. The designation of the spirits as “unclean” comes from Mark. Although the word usually means immorality associated with sexual experience, this is probably not meant here; the word appears to be synonymous with “evil.” (JBC)

Matthew has previously spoken of Jesus’ [disciples](#) in a general way, without distinguishing clearly between general adherents and “special disciples,” though 4:19 must refer to the latter. Now he mentions the [twelve](#) for the first time. The inner group was approximately of this number, although its personnel may have fluctuated somewhat. An old Jewish tradition said that Jesus had five disciples named Mattai, Naqai, Necer, Buni, and Toda. To cast out [unclean spirits](#) is the work of the high-priestly Messiah in the Testament of Levi 18:12. Mark 6:7 (=Luke 9:1) pictures Jesus as giving this power, but Q does not (Luke 10:9). (IB)

Verses 2-4:

The list of the Twelve has the same names as Mark 3:16-19 with some changes. Peter is singled out as “first”. The Twelve are arranged in pairs, with the two sets of brothers mentioned first; this may reflect Mark 6:7, in which the Twelve are sent out in pairs. To the name Matthew is added “the tax collector.” The nickname of Boanerges for

the sons of Zebedee is omitted. (JBC)

Similar lists are given in Mark 3:16-19, Luke 6:14-16, and Acts 1:13; the second-century Epistle of the Apostles has a very different list (chapter 2). The Gospel of John gives no list of the twelve, and its most prominent disciples are not those of the Synoptics. (IB)

Verse 2:

Only here does Matthew use the word [apostles](#). In the NT the term is applied not only to the Twelve but to various others--Paul and Barnabas (Galatians 1:1; Acts 14:14), Matthias (Acts 1:26), James and the other brothers of the Lord (I Corinthians 9:5; Galatians 1:19), Andronicus and Junias (Romans 16:7). It designates those who are "sent with a commission" to proclaim salvation through Christ. It is sometimes argued that all apostle had seen the risen Lord (I Corinthians 9:1; 15:7; Acts 1:22). The corresponding Hebrew word denotes one who is commissioned as an agent in legal matters by an individual or by a court, or who is entrusted with offering prayer. At a later time the Jewish patriarch often sent an apostle to collect funds or to root out heresy, and perhaps Paul's work was analogous to this, both before and after his conversion. Matthew elsewhere prefers to speak of the twelve as disciples, since he thinks of the ideal Christian leader as a rabbi, but here he exhibits the view of late first-century Christianity, which is that the twelve were the first apostles. Such an idea dominates Luke-Acts, but is absent from Mark. [Simon](#) or Simeon is almost always thought of as [first](#) in rank among the twelve. His surname [Peter](#) translates his Aramaic nickname "rock", which we find in Galatians 1:18; I Corinthians 1:12; John 1:42, and elsewhere. (IB)

Verse 3:

[Philip](#), like Andrew, is a Greek name. The bar in [Bartholomew](#) ought to mean "son of", but the derivation of the rest of the name is uncertain. John 11:16; 20:24 translates [Thomas](#) as "twin," and the name may be a Hellenized form of the Aramaic word for twin. [Matthew](#) appears in all lists of the twelve and is substituted for Levi in 9:9. [Alphaeus](#) is a Greek name, but attempts have been made to find Aramaic equivalents such as Clopas (John 19:25). [Thaddaeus](#) is the reading of Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and a few other good manuscripts and is adopted by RSV; while Codex Bezae reads Lebbaeus" here and in Mark 3:19. The text of KJV combines the two. Ecclesiastical tradition has identified this disciple with Judas son of James (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13). This variety has led some scholars to ask whether the number of the disciples was always exactly twelve. (IB)

Verse 4:

[Cananean](#) -- Simon's appellative is not the gentilic name of the pre-Israelite people of Palestine, but a Greek transcription of the Aram word for "Zealot," a member of the radical anti-Roman revolutionary party. Simon had no doubt abandoned this allegiance. (JBC)

[Simon the Cananean](#) -- was probably not a Canaanite (KJV). The word may be an Aramaic equivalent of the "Zealot" of Luke 6:15. Perhaps before his conversion Simon had been one of a band of anti-Roman revolutionaries, but there is no evidence for this. He may simply have been zealous for the law. The meaning of [Iscariot](#) is a famous problem, and the usual explanation is "man of Kerioth"; that is, a certain village. One scholar has derived it from an Aramaic name meaning "the false." The phrase [who](#)

betrayed him would thus mean almost the same thing. (IB)

Iscariot -- Judas Iscariot was son of Simon (John 12:4; interestingly, the best readings of 6:71 and 13:26 would seem to describe Simon as the Iscariot, thus: “Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot”). The surname of Judas has uncertain meaning, but most take it to reflect a Hebrew term, meaning “a man from Kerioth,” a town in southern Judea, an interpretation that would make Judas the only known non-Galilean member of the Twelve. Others interpret the name as reflecting yet another Jewish term, meaning “dagger man”, which is a Latin name for a member of a nationalist Jewish group related to the Zealots. (JBC--78:170).

The twelve are called “apostles” only here in Matthew. No appointment of the Twelve is related by Matthew other than this: both Mark and Luke mentions the election of the Twelve. (JBC)

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13. Read Mark 6:6b-7 in its entirety.

(1) Luke 9:15

(2) Luke 10:4-11

Mark 6:6b-7

6b He went around to the villages in the vicinity teaching.

7 He summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits.

Verse 6b:

He went around to the villages -- This summary begins a new phase of Jesus’ ministry; rejected by his own townspeople and relatives, he devotes himself to his disciples, whose mission is being prepared. Mark is fond of pointing out that Jesus preached in the country villages (1:38; 5:14; 6:56). (JBC)

As is so often found in Mark, Jesus is presented as **teaching**, but without any suggestion of the content of his discourses. (IB)

It has been thought that the sending out of the disciples was motivated by the “rejection” at Nazareth, but there is no hint of this in Mark. Instead, he conceives the appointment of the apostles (3:14; cf. 6:30) as for this purpose. Both Matthew (chapter 10) and Luke (chapters 9-10) elaborate this section, with the result that it becomes a set of directions for the later mission of the church. Perhaps that was the point of view even in Q, upon which all three parallels, Mark included, seem to be based--Mark, as elsewhere, giving only an abridgement. That it was a temporary mission is clear as one scholar as noted: “the disciples are hereafter seen as lacking in initiative and independence as they were before.” But neither the theory that the mission belonged after the Resurrection as noted by yet another scholar, nor the view that it was Jesus’ last-minute appeal to the nation before the Day of Judgment as has been maintained by yet another scholar, has much to commend it. Josephus description of the Essenes shows at least that such missionary activity was not unknown in first-century Palestine; it was also characteristic of the apostolic church, and later, as the Didache makes clear. (IB)

Verse 7:

Mark’s separation of the institution of the twelve from the mission charge is a

literary artifice that places the charge after Jesus had begun to preach in parables. (JBC)

Possibly verse 6b belongs with this section, as part of its introduction--so modern editions of the Greek text, as well as ancient lectionaries. **Power over unclean spirits**; that is, power like his own. This had already been given them in 3:15, unless there it is viewed as part of the eventual purpose of their call and appointment (like 3:14c). That it was not a permanent authorization, or that it had its limitations, is suggested by 9:18, 28, though quite possibly Mark never considered the problem. Another possibility is that verse 7b is an editorial insertion; it is implied, however, in verse 13a. (IB)

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14. Read Luke 9:1-2 in its entirety.

(1) Matthew 10:1, 5-15

(2) Mark 6:7-13

Luke 9:1-2

- 1 He summoned the Twelve and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases,
- 2 and he sent them to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal (the sick).

Luke omits Mark's account of Jesus' visit to Nazareth (Mark 6:1-6); he has already incorporated the material in a thumbnail sketch of Jesus' entire ministry (4:14-30). Another instruction by Jesus to missionaries will be given in chapter 10 (Q), and a final reference will be made to it in the Last Supper scene (22:35f). A comparison of these various charges make us suspect that either the early church or else the evangelists adapted Jesus' original instruction. For instance, Luke 9:3 and Matthew 10:10 forbid a staff, but Mark 6:8 allows one; Luke 10:4 and Matthew 10:10 forbid sandals, but Mark 6:9 allows them. If Mark is closer to Jesus' own words, then Matthew and Luke are spiritualizing the charge into the an interior ideal of total trust in God. Because of the necessity of shaking off foreign dust before entering the Jerusalem Temple and the prohibition of bringing profane money into the sacred precincts (John 2:14), the passage can be interpreted metaphorically: in all your undertakings, act as though you are standing in God's presence; enter the house of each Christian as you would the Temple of God. (JBC)

Both Mark and Q had accounts of Jesus' missionary instructions to the twelve. Matthew was content to combine his two sources (Matthew 9:37 - 10:1, 5-15). Luke used a few details from the Q narrative to modify Mark's story at this point but reserved the bulk of it for another context (10:1-11). (IB)

Although we are not told that the twelve were ever employed in another mission, there is little reason to doubt that Jesus had the extension of his ministry in mind when he chose them (Mark 3:14). He may well have intended to use his disciples as aides much more extensively than time and opportunity permitted. But this passage speaks of the disciple's work only in the vaguest terms (verse 6); and no doubt Mark and Luke recorded it, not out of any objective interest in a historical event, but because it authorized the methods of early Christian evangelism. (IB)

Verse 1:

called the twelve -- different from the instructions to the seventy[two?] disciples

in 10:1-16, the twelve are not sent out two by two. In the early church, each of the twelve was a rule to himself through the special charism of his office. (JBC)

In 10:17 the “seventy” report to Jesus that “even the demons are subject to us in your name.” Nevertheless the idea that Jesus formally transferred personal **power** (Luke only) and divine **authority** to his followers looks like ecclesiastical theory. Luke 9:40 (Mark 9:18) reports the inability of the disciples on one occasion to practice exorcism. (IB)

Verse 2:

to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal -- Before Pentecost, the twelve are never commissioned to teach a deeper understanding of the mystery of salvation but simply to preach that the kingdom of God is at hand. Healing as well as preaching indicates that the kingdom is not simply a spiritual enterprise, but one that looked forward to the full renewal of man in both body and soul. Curing sickness was an assault upon the kingdom of Satan (4:33-37, 40; 5:18-26). (JBC)

Luke appears to have inserted this into Mark’s account under the influence of the Q version (cf. Matthew 10:7-8). (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

Although, in all likelihood, the words, from which quotation of Matthew 9:36-38 are made, were spoken at a later time, they are entirely in the spirit of the present mission of the twelve, that they, or words to a similar effect, may also be uttered on the present occasion. Of such seeming repetitions, when the circumstances are analogous, although sometimes with different application of the same many-sided words, there are not a few instances, of which one will presently come under notice. Truly those to whom the twelve were sent forth were “troubled” as well as “scattered,” like sheep that have not a Shepherd, and it was to deliver them from the “distress” caused by “grievous wolves”, and to gather His fold those that had been scattered abroad, that Jesus sent forth the Twelve with the special commission to which attention will soon be directed. Viewing it in its fullest form, it is to be noted:

1. This discourse of Christ consists of five parts: Matthew 10:5-15; 16-23; 24-33; 34-39; and 40 to the end.
2. Many passages in it occur in different connections in the other two synoptic, especially in Mark 13, and in Luke 12 and 21. From this it may be inferred, either that Jesus spoke the same or similar words on more than one occasion (when the circumstances were analogous), or else that Matthew grouped together in one discourse, as being internally connected, sayings that may have been spoken on different occasions. Or else--and this seems to us the most likely--both these inferences may in part be correct. Why, because:
3. It is evident, that the discourse reported by Matthew goes far beyond that mission of the twelve, beyond even that of the early church, indeed, sketches the history of the church’s mission in a hostile world, up “to the end.” At the same time it is equally evident, that the predictions, warnings, and promises applicable to a later period in the church’s history, hold equally true in principle in reference to the first mission of the twelve; and, conversely, that what specially applied to it, also holds true in principle of the whole subsequent history of the church in its relation to a hostile world. Thus, what was specially spoken at this time to the twelve, has ever since, and rightly, been applied

to the church; while that in it, which specifically refers to the church of the future, would in principle apply also to the twelve.

4. This distinction of primary and secondary application in the different parts of the discourse, and their union in the general principles underlying them, has to be kept in view, if we are to understand this discourse of Christ. Hence, also, the present and the future seem in it so often to run into each other. The horizon is gradually enlarging throughout the discourse, but there is not change in the standpoint originally occupied; and so as the present merges into the future, and the future mingles with the present. And this, indeed, is also the characteristic of much of OT prophecy, and which made the prophet ever a preacher of the present, even while he was a foreteller of the future.

5. It is evidential of its authenticity, and deserves special notice, that this discourse, while so un-Jewish in spirit, is more than any other, even more than that on the Mount, Jewish in its forms of thought and mode of expression.

With the help of these principles, it will be more easy to mark the general outline of the discourse. Its first part applies entirely to this first mission of the twelve, although the closing words point forward to "the judgment." Accordingly it has its parallels, although in briefer form, in the other two synoptic gospels.

q. THE COMMISSIONING OF THE TWELVE

Matthew 10:5-15

Mark 6:8-13

Luke 9:3-6

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|-----|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 15. | Read Matthew 10:5-15 in its entirety. | |
| | (1) Mark 6:7-13 | (2) Luke 9:1-6 |
| 16. | Read Matthew 10:5 | |
| | (1) No reference | |
| 17. | Read Matthew 10:6 | |
| | (1) Matthew 15:24 | |
| 18. | Read Matthew 10:7 | |
| | (1) Matthew 3:2 | (2) Matthew 4:17 |
| 19. | Read Matthew 10:8 | |
| | (1) No reference | |
| 20. | Read Matthew 10:9-10 | |
| | (1) Mark 6:8-9 | (3) Luke 10:4 |
| | (2) Luke 9:3 | |
| 21. | Read Matthew 10:10 | |
| | (1) Luke 10:7 | (3) II Timothy 5:18 |

- (2) I Corinthians 9:14
22. Read Matthew 10:11-15
 (1) Mark 6:10-11 (3) Luke 10:5-12
 (2) Luke 9:4-5
23. Read Matthew 10:15
 (1) Genesis 19:1-29 (3) Jude 7
 (2) Matthew 11:24

Matthew 10:5-15

- 5 Jesus sent out these twelve after instructing them thus, "Do not go into pagan territory or enter a Samaritan town.
- 6 Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
- 7 As you go, make this proclamation: 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'
- 8 Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give.
- 9 Do not take gold or silver or copper for your belts;
- 10 no sack for the journey, or a second tunic, or sandals, or walking stick. The laborer deserves his keep.
- 11 Whatever town or village you enter, look for a worthy person in it, and stay there until you leave.
- 12 As you enter a house, wish it peace.
- 13 If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; if not, let your peace return to you.
- 14 Whoever will not receive you or listen to your words--go outside that house or town and shake the dust from your feet.
- 15 Amen, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

Verses 5-8 are peculiar to Matthew, except for the commission to proclaim the reign (verse 7), where the same words are used that appear in the proclamation of John the Baptist (3:2) and Jesus (4:17). (JBC)

Jesus usually traveled in Jewish territory, though Mark 7:24-31; 8:27 - 9:1 tell of his travels on Gentile soil and, according to Luke, he was once in the neighborhood of Samaria. Would it have been necessary for Jesus to give this command? The presence of this saying in the tradition--"to Israel alone"-- helps to explain why a Gentile mission developed so late. There is a tradition in the second-century preaching of Peter that Jesus told the disciples to wait twelve years before going to the Gentiles (James, Apocryphal NT). (IB)

Verse 5:

In the KJV -- "Go not into the way of the Gentiles" is probably a road leading to a Gentile city, such as one of the cities of the Decapolis. Jews were forbidden to go on such a road at the time of a pagan festival if the road lead only to the Gentile city. Intermarriage with Samaritans was forbidden; and the Mishnah says, "He who eats the

bread of the Samaritans is like one who eats pork.” (IB)

Verse 6:

[to the lost sheep of the house of Israel](#) -- Matthew limits the mission of the twelve to Israel; a similar limitation of the mission of Jesus himself is found in 15:24, also peculiar to Matthew. The mission to the Gentiles was as much a fact when Matthew was written as it was when Mark and Luke were written, and Matthew certainly accepts the mission to the Gentiles. The words are obviously not understood as a precept of Jesus, which the apostolic church did not follow. They reflect the historical fact, assured in all the Gospels, that the mission of Jesus himself was limited to Jews. More important, they express the principle, not stated so clearly in Mark and Luke, that the Jews had a prior call and a peculiar responsibility. The Jews rejected this call, and the implication is that they lost thereby a peculiar place in the reign. Luke has a similar statement (Acts 13:46-47). These passages suggest that the awareness that there was a mission to the Gentiles developed by stages in the apostolic community; the various NT writings represent different stages. The ideal was that Judaism, transformed by faith in its Messiah, should be the agent of the proclamation to the Gentiles. (JBC)

Jesus did much work among the “lost sheep of the house of Israel.” These may have been the Amhaarez, “people of the land” or country people, careless of the details of the law, whom the Pharisees regarded with contempt. Hillel, one of the greatest of all rabbis, said that “[none of this kind] is religious,” and in John 7:49 the Pharisees say, “This crowd, who do not know the law, are accursed.” But Jesus’ attitude is seen in 22:8-10; Luke 15:3-10 etc. (IB)

Verse 7:

This is Jesus’ message in Mark 1:15, and Q may have contained such a command (Luke 9:2). (IB)

Verse 8:

[Cure the sick](#) -- This is a communication of the powers of healing and exorcism to the twelve. (JBC)

[Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give](#) -- Jesus’ saying is illustrated in verses 9-12, and it was clearly the understanding of the apostolic church that the gospel was not sold nor were its apostles paid. Several rabbinical sayings preserved in the Talmud warn the rabbi that he must accept a fee for instruction in the Law; the scribe should have a trade by which he could support himself. It was a point of honor with Paul that he did not even avail himself of the privilege stated here (10:10b; see I Corinthians 9:12). This passage is a more urgent and practical expansion of the discourse about the care in the Sermon on the Mount (6:25-34). The prohibition is rigorous in all three Gospels, but there are some variations in detail. Mark has, “Take nothing,” Luke has “Take no money.” Matthew specifies still further “neither gold nor silver, nor bronze,” the metals from which coins were minted. Even the place where the coins were usually carried is mentioned, that is, in the girdle. (JBC)

Chapters 8 and 9 have given examples of this activity on the part of Jesus. The Jews believed that several great rabbis had the power to “raise the dead.” Their finest teachers also acted on the principle “You received without pay, give without pay;” -- It is said in the Talmud that “he who makes profit out of words of the law removes his life from the world”. (IB)

Verse 9:

Mark 6:8 mentions only “copper”; Jesus disciples seldom had “gold and silver.” Coins were often carried in “belts.” (IB)

Verse 10:

no sack -- or “no bag” in some versions. The purse or bag was used to hold food; the ancient traveler, if he was poor, traveled with not much more than the twelve are permitted here. Mark rather practically allows a staff and sandals; the exclusion of these two articles in Matthew and Luke is no doubt an ideal heightening of the poverty of the missionary. (JBC)

The “bag” might be for food. Even a change of undergarments was unnecessary. Mark, writing for Gentiles, permits a “staff and sandals,” but Q did not. Of course, most of the journeys were short, but one scholar went through his Arabian campaigns barefoot. “The laborer deserves his food” is a Jewish principle; cf. I Corinthians 9:3-14; Didache 11:6, 12. (IB)

(n)or a second tunic -- to carry a change of linen was a luxury in the ancient world. None of these material things will be needed, for the twelve will have their needs provided by those to whom they proclaim. (JBC)

Verse 11:

stay there until you leave -- It is not supposed that this provision is the minimum that a hospitable person would offer to any traveler, even to a stranger. This is the food given to the laborer would offer to any traveler, even to a stranger. This is the food given to the laborer for his labor. Even in the forced labor of the ancient world the laborer received either a small wage or a portion of food for himself and his family for the day. The twelve are assured this type of support. Paul quotes a saying of Jesus not found in the Gospels (I Corinthians 9:14) that makes the proclamation the sole support of the missionaries. It is assumed that they will be unable to support themselves by any other employment. Although Paul did support himself at Corinth, this seems to have been an exception in his own practice. (JBC)

worthy person -- The adjective “worthy” occurs with unusual frequency in this chapter. “Worth” is shown first by offering hospitality to the missionaries, and secondly by faith in the Gospel. (JBC)

Verses 11-13:

Luke 10:5-6 preserves a more primitive saying. The missionary, on entering, must say, “Peace be to this house,” and if a “son of peace” (that is, one who will receive the blessing and respond to it in like manner) is present, the blessing will take effect; if not, the blessing returns to the missionary and will be bestowed on others (cf. 5:9, 47). Matthew’s use of the word “worthy” introduces a moralistic note which was almost certainly not originally present. (IB)

Verse 13:

let your peace come upon it -- The blessing to come upon the worthy house was expressed in the usual greeting, “Peace to you.”; Luke makes the greeting explicit by quoting the formula. “Peace” is not an adequate translation; the greeting is a wish that all may be well with the person greeted. It is represented as a dynamic word which is sent out by the speaker, and which returns to him if it is unable to fulfill its meaning. (JBC)

if not, let your peace return to you -- Or “If it is not worthy” in some versions

rather than “if not”. Those who refuse to give hospitality and to listen to the proclamation are to be left; the symbolic action of shaking the dust from the feet expresses complete dissociation. (JBC)

Verse 14:

Jews who had been in pagan territory shook “the dust from [their] feet” so that they might not make the holy land unclean. An unfriendly “house or town” is to be greeted as heathen; similar gestures are found in Nehemiah 5:13; Acts 18:6. This verse may contemplate conditions of later missionary work but the basic idea comes from Jesus: when you are not accepted, do not waste time but go elsewhere (22:8-9). (IB)

Verse 15:

The unbelievers are to be left to the judgment of God; the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah, which in the OT is the proverbial example of the wrath of God (Genesis 19:4), is less severe than the judgment for unbelief. This last expression of condemnation from Q. (JBC)

“Sodom” was proverbially the wicked city (as in 11:23-24; Ezekiel 16:48-50; Luke 17:29). It abused its guests (Genesis 19:4-9), though this is not said of the equally wicked “Gomorrah.” The rabbis debated whether the people of Sodom would be resurrected and judged on “the day of judgment.” (IB)

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24. Read Mark 6:8-13 in its entirety.

(1) No reference

25. Read Mark 6:8-12.

(1) No reference

26. Read Mark 6:13

(1) James 5:14

Mark 6:8-13

8 He instructed them to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick--no food, no sack, no money in their belts.

9 They were, however, to wear sandals but not a second tunic.

10 He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave from there.

11 Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them."

12 So they went off and preached repentance.

13 They drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Verse 8:

He instructed them -- Some versions read “he charged them”. This same verb is used in Matthew to introduce the mission discourse in 10:5; in Mark, however, there are only the slightest vestiges of a discourse, and even the instructions Jesus gives show

differences. Mark has adapted Jesus' instructions by introducing several exceptions that suggest a later stage of missionary activity--that of the church outside Palestine. For the same reason Mark omits mention of the prohibition to go "among the Gentiles or to any Samaritan town" (Matthew 10:5). (JBC)

no food -- This mention is emphatic. It prepares for the miracles in 6:35-44 and 8:1-9, where Jesus himself will give bread. (JBC)

Verses 8-9:

Their equipment was to be the simplest, for their "journey" about Galilee would not take long, and they could rely upon hospitality for their food and shelter. The "staff" forbidden in Luke and Matthew is permitted here--unless the text of Mark is at fault. The wearing of "two tunics" in Mark is changed by Matthew and Luke to the owning of them. (IB)

Verse 10:

He said to them -- This is Mark's customary linking formula. (JBC)

Wherever you enter a house -- The instruction in this verse is an abbreviation of what Matthew reports more fully in 10:11-14. The effect is to highlight the acceptance or non-acceptance of the disciples rather than the eschatological lesson in Matthew 10:15. The latter is only suggested in Mark's words, "for a testimony against them," that is, as proof that they are condemned for rejecting the disciples. (JBC)

Verses 10-11:

The hospitality of their hearers is taken for granted, as could well be done; the hospitality of religious-minded Jews was well known, and is reflected more than once in the Bible. "Shake off--testimony against them" is a symbolic act denoting a complete break in relations and a repudiation of further responsibility for them. The terrible judgment that overthrew "Sodom and Gomorrah" (Genesis 19:24) was a common example of what was to be expected on "the day of judgment;" but the whole sentence is absent from the best manuscripts of Mark, and is a gloss derived from the parallels (Matthew 10:15; Luke 10:12--though prior to all the Gospels it may have been found at this point in Q. RSV [and NAB] correctly omits this sentence whereas KJV retains it. (IB)

Verse 12:

"men should repent" is found in some versions. According to Luke 9:2; 10:9, the disciples proclaim the imminence of God's kingdom; according to Mark, this proclamation is reserved to Jesus, whereas the disciples and the Baptist preach repentance (1:4, 15; cf. Matthew 3:2) as a preparation for Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom. (JBC)

Verses 12-13:

The brief description of the disciples' ministry as preaching repentance, exorcism, and anointing with oil (cf. 3:14-15; 6:30) is suggestive. Preaching and teaching (6:30) are evidently identical, at this point (cf. Luke 9:6); exorcism was likewise an extension of Jesus' own ministry; but anointing sounds unusual, though it was a common treatment of the sick in ancient times; (cf. James 5:14-15). Neither Matthew nor Luke retains this feature--though Luke 9:6 says that they were "healing everywhere"--and nowhere is Jesus himself described as using oil. Perhaps the feature is best explained as a reflection of later apostolic practice. (IB)

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27. Read Luke 9:3-6 in its entirety.
(1) No reference
28. Read Luke 9:3
(1) No reference
29. Read Luke 9:4
(1) Luke 10:5-7
30. Read Luke 9:5
(1) Luke 10:10-11 (2) Acts 13:51
31. Read Luke 9:6
(1) No reference

Luke 9:3-6

- 3 He said to them, "Take nothing for the journey, neither walking stick, nor sack, nor food, nor money, and let no one take a second tunic.
- 4 Whatever house you enter, stay there and leave from there.
- 5 And as for those who do not welcome you, when you leave that town, shake the dust from your feet in testimony against them."
- 6 Then they set out and went from village to village proclaiming the good news and curing diseases everywhere.

Mark's version of the instructions had permitted "a staff" and "sandals," but these concessions to the necessities of the Hellenistic mission were not made in the Q account, which often reflects a strictly Palestinian milieu. The "bag" that was forbidden was one used by travelers to carry provisions. The Q version forbade the possession--Mark's the wearing-- of "two tunics", which were shirts or undergarments (cf. 3:11). The missionaries were not to accept hospitality from more than one host in any one center and were not to waste precious time on any who would not "receive" their message. The rabbis held that even pagan dust was "unclean" and should be removed by a traveler returning to Palestine. To "shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them" may therefore have been a gesture by which a Christian declared that a city had no part in the true Israel (cf. Acts 13:51). The instructions reflect the apocalyptic atmosphere of early Christianity--the imminence of the kingdom and the need for haste in "preaching the gospel"--but are also true, as far as we can see, to the framework of Jesus' own thought. (IB)

Verse 3:

Like the Levites in the OT, the twelve inherit the right to community support (Numbers 18:31; I Corinthians 9:7-18). (JBC)

Verse 5:

[dust from your feet](#) -- See Acts. 13:51. (JBC)

Verse 6:

[went from village to village](#) -- Some versions simply read "everywhere". Luke

adds this universal note to Mark's account. (JBC)

Summary from LToJC:

The twelve were to go forth two and two, furnished with authority--or, as Luke more fully expresses it, with "power and authority"--over all demons and to heal all manner of diseases. It is of secondary importance, whether this was conveyed to them by word only, or with some sacramental sign, such as breathing on them or the laying on of hands. The special commission, for which they received such power, was to proclaim the near advent of the Kingdom, and in manifestation as well as in evidence of it, to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons. They were to speak good and to do good in the highest sense, and that in a manner which all would feel good; freely, even as they had received it. Again, they were not to make any special provision for their journey, beyond the absolute immediate present. One scholar has the curious idea that the prohibitions about money etc. refer to their not making gain on their journey. They were but laborers, et as such they had claim to support. Their Employer would provide, and the field in which they worked might well be expected to supply it. According to Jewish Law, the laborers would be secured their food.

Sandals but not shoes. As regards the marked difference about "the staff," one scholar points out the agreement of thought in all the gospels. Nothing was to be taken--they were to go as they stood, without preparation or provision. Sometimes there was a secret receptacle at the top of the staff to hold valuables, or, in the case of the poor, water.

In accordance with this, singleness of purpose and an entire self-denial, which should lead them not to make provision "for the flesh," but as laborers to be content with daily food, were the further injunctions laid on them. Before entering into a city, they were to make inquiry, literally to "search out", who in it was "worthy", and of them to ask hospitality; not seeking during their stay a change for the gratification of vanity or for self-indulgence. If the report on which they had made choice of a host proved true, then the "Peace with thee!" with which they had entered their temporary home, would become a reality. Christ would make it such. As He had given them "power and authority", so he would "honor" the draft on him, in acknowledgement of hospitable reception, which the apostles' "Peace with thee" implied.

But even if this house should prove unworthy, the Lord would none the less own the words of His messengers and make them real; only in such case the peace would return to them who had spoken it. Yet another case was possible. The house to which their inquires had led them, or the city into which they had entered, might refuse to receive them, because they came as Christ's ambassadors. Greater, indeed, would be their guilt than that of the cities of the plain, since these had not known the character of the heavenly guests to whom they refused reception; and more terrible would be their future punishment. So Christ would vindicate their authority as well as His own, and show the reality of their commission: on the one hand, by making their word of peace a reality to those who had proved worthy; while, on the other hand, by punishment if their message was refused. Finally, in their present mission they were not to touch either Gentile or Samaritan territory. The direction--so different in spirit from what Jesus himself had previously said and done, and from their own later commission--was, of course, only for the present necessity. The direction is recorded only by Matthew. But Matthew 28:19 would, if it were necessary, sufficiently prove that this is not a limitation

to Jewish environments only. For the present they were neither prepared nor fitted to go beyond the circuit indicated. It would have been a fatal anticipation of their inner and outer history to have attempted this, and it would have defeated the object of our Lord in disarming prejudices when making a final appeal to the Jews of Galilee.

Even these considerations lead us to expect a strictly Jewish cast in this discourse to the disciples. The command to abstain from any religious fellowship with Gentiles and Samaritans was in temporary accommodation to the prejudices of his disciples and of the Jews. And the distinction between “the way of the Gentiles” and “any city of the Samaritans” is the more significant, when we bear in mind that even the dust of a heathen road was regarded as defiling, while the houses, springs, roads, and certain food of the Samaritans were declared clean. At the same time, religiously and as regarded fellowship, the Samaritans were placed on the same footing with Gentiles. Nor would the injunction, to impart their message freely, sound strange in Jewish ears. It was, in fact, what the Rabbis themselves most earnestly enjoined in regard to their practice of the Law and traditions, however different their practice may have been. Indeed, the very argument, that they were to impart freely, because they had received freely, is employed by the Rabbis, and derived from the language and example of Moses in Deuteronomy 4:5. At the same time, the statement in the Talmud that “if needful money was to be paid for the acquisition of learning, according to Proverbs 23:23 (“by the truth”), implies that the rule cannot always have been strictly observed. Also, the directions about not taking staff, shoes, nor money-purse, exactly correspond to the Rabbinic injunction not to enter the Temple-precincts with staff, shoes (notice, not sandals), and a money-girdle. The symbolic reasons underlying this command would, in both cases, be probably the same: to avoid even the appearance of being engaged on other business, when the whole being should be absorbed in the service of the Lord. At any rate, it would convey to the disciples the idea, that they were to consider themselves as if entering the Temple-precincts, thus carrying out the principle of Jesus’ first thought in the temple: “Do you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?” Nor could they be in doubt what severity of final punishment a doom heavier than that of Sodom and Gomorrah would imply, since, according to early tradition, their inhabitants were to have no part in the world to come. And most impressive to a Jewish mind would be the symbolic injunction, to shake off the dust of their feet for a testimony against such a house or city. The expression, no doubt, indicated that the ban of the Lord was resting on it, and the symbolic act would, as it were, be the solemn pronouncing that “nothing of the cursed thing “clung to them.” In this sense that clinging to a person was metaphorically called “the dust,” as for example, “the dust of an evil tongue,” “the dust of usuary,” as, on the other hand, to “dust to idolatry” meant to “cleave to it.” Even the injunction not to change the dwelling where one had been received was in accordance with Jewish views, the example of Abraham being quoted, who “returned to the place where his tent had been at the beginning.”

These remarks show how closely the Lord followed, in this first part of his charge to the disciples, Jewish forms of thinking and modes of expression. It is not likewise in the second, although the difference is here very marked. We have no longer merely the original commission, as it is given in almost the same terms by Mark and Luke. But the horizon is enlarged, and Matthew reports that which the other evangelists record at a later

stage of the Lord's ministry. Matthew himself could not have intended to confine the words of Jesus to this first journey of the apostles, since they contain references to division in families, persecutions, and conflict with civil power, such as belong to a much later period in the history of the church; and, besides, contain also that prediction which could not have applied to this first mission of the apostles--"you shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man comes."

* * * * *

r. COMING PERSECUTIONS

Matthew 10:16-25

32. Read Matthew 10:16-25 in its entirety.
(1) No reference
33. Read Matthew 10:16
(1) Luke 10:3
34. Read Matthew 10:17-22
(1) Mark 13:9-13 (2) Luke 21:12-19
35. Read Matthew 10:17
(1) Acts 5:40
36. Read Matthew 10:18
(1) No reference
37. Read Matthew 10:19
(1) Exodus 4:11-12 (3) Luke 12:11-12
(2) Jeremiah 1:6-10
38. Read Matthew 10: 20
(1) No reference
39. Read Matthew 10:21-22
(1) Matthew 24:9, 13
40. Read Matthew 10:23
(1) No reference
41. Read Matthew 10:24-25
(1) Luke 6:40 (3) John 15:20
(2) John 13:16

Matthew 10:16-25

- 16 "Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves.
- 17 But beware of people, for they will hand you over to courts and scourge you in their synagogues,
- 18 and you will be led before governors and kings for my sake as a witness before them and the pagans.
- 19 When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say.
- 20 For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.
- 21 Brother will hand over brother to death, and the father his child; children will rise up against parents and have them put to death.
- 22 You will be hated by all because of my name, but whoever endures to the end will be saved.
- 23 When they persecute you in one town, flee to another. Amen, I say to you, you will not finish the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.
- 24 No disciple is above his teacher, no slave above his master.
- 25 It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, for the slave that he become like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more those of his household!

Verses 16-39 are primarily addressed to the Christian church rather than to the original disciples. The distinction between leaders and people largely disappears, for anyone might undergo these dangers. It is not surprising that Matthew includes this teaching, for although ministers had special functions they did not constitute a professional class and the same moral and religious qualities were expected of all Christians. (IB)

Verse 16:

Jesus may have spoken these two poetic proverbs at a time when his teaching had begun to arouse criticism. The similes have parallels in Jewish writings and elsewhere. The verses that follow are used as a comment on the proverbs, and are such a close reproduction of Mark 13:9-13 that the evangelist does not use that material again in chapter 24 when he rewrites Mark 13. (IB)

Matthew alone has the proverbial saying about the sheep among wolves, the prudence of the serpent, and the simplicity of the dove. Such animal proverbs are found among all peoples, and they appear in the wisdom of the OT. It is a commonplace of wisdom that man combines in himself the paradoxical features of different animals. "Prudent" means that one is thoughtful and perceptive; the serpent always knows where it is going and what it is doing. "Simple" means innocent of malice; the prudence of the missionaries is not the crafty shrewdness of those who are alert to do harm to others. The missionaries are defenseless; this is expanded in the discourse that follows. (JBC)

10:17 - 11:1 contains a grouping of sayings of Jesus suitable to the missionary endeavor; these sayings have been appended to extend the discourse. (JBC)

Verses 17-25 reflect the experience of the primitive church; it alludes to

persecution both by Jews (verse 17) and by Gentiles (verse 18). These verses are a fuller form of Mark 13:9, summarized in 24:9. See Luke 21:12-18. (JBC)

Verse 17:

courts -- Some versions read “councils.” The plural refers both to the great council in Jerusalem (the Sanhedrin) of 72 members, which heard the case of Jesus and examined the apostles (Acts 3 - 5) and to local councils. The Talmud prescribes that in a community that numbers as many as 120 there should be a local council of 23 members. (JBC)

The “councils” are presumably the local sanhedrins, composed of primarily 23 members each, which functioned in Jewish cities other than Jerusalem. They probably met in synagogues. Deuteronomy 25:1-3 provides for the scourging, which was usually administered by the synagogue attendant; but according to Acts 22:19 Paul himself had beaten Christians. Rabbinical law restricted the strokes to 39, and Paul underwent this punishment five times (II Corinthians 11:24). (IB)

Verse 18:

governors -- A generic name for Roman provincial officers. (JBC)

kings -- This refers to such satellite rulers as Herod Antipas and Herod Agrippa. The punishment of flogging was suffered by Paul (II Corinthians 11:24); it was limited to 40 stripes, always diminished by one to protect the Law. (JBC)

The “governors” may be Roman officials like Pilate, and “kings” can include tetrarchs like Herod Antipas as well as such local kings as Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1). A good example of such “testimony” is found in the *Acts of the Scilitan Martyrs*. These martyrs suffered in north Africa in 180. (IB)

Verses 19-20:

Carefully worked out defenses will not necessarily protect Jesus’ followers. It is far better for them to speak the prophetic word of God and to leave their fate in his hands. “Your father” is characteristic of Matthew’s style. (IB)

Verse 20:

The assistance of the Spirit is promised the disciples when they have to bear witness for Jesus (see Mark 13:11; John 14:26; Luke 21:14-15; 12:11-12). Such charismatic witness is related in Acts 4:8; 13:9. (JBC)

Verses 21-22:

The details of these verses suggest the first great persecution of Christians under Nero in the year 64 A.D. Since they were charged with “hatred of the human race”, they no doubt felt they were “hated by all” and suffered for the sake of Jesus’ name (cf. I Peter 4:12-16). Later persecutions were, in fact, because of the “name” alone. “He who endures to the end will be saved.” This saying in Mark 13:13 referred to the great tribulation at the end of the age; here it means that one who endures persecution heroically will save his soul. (IB)

Verse 21:

The gospel will be a cause of division in families; this seems to refer primarily to Jewish families. The hatred of all men comes from Mark 13:13; Matthew uses the line again in 24:9. The line is a strange inversion of the charge of “hatred of the human race,” which Roman writers laid against Christians. (JBC)

Verse 22:

whoever endures to the end -- Sustains persecution even to death. (JBC)
will be saved -- Here “being saved” does not have the usual meaning of escaping with one’s life, but of assuring one’s eschatological salvation. (JBC)

Verse 23:

flee to another [town] -- The disciples are not to sacrifice themselves rashly; the proclamation of the gospel is their primary task, and if they are prevented from proclaiming the gospel in one place they should move on to another. (JBC)

before the Son of Man comes -- This verse is an ancient exegetical puzzle. If it means that the parousia is expected before the disciples even begin the Gentile mission, one can only wonder at the fidelity with which the church preserved sayings attributed to Jesus that were in such manifest contradiction with the actual course of events. Obviously the saying was not understood in this sense; and it seems most probable that it was understood to refer to the Jewish War of 66-70 A.D., which elsewhere is associated with the coming of the Son of Man in judgment. (JBC)

No doubt because this tradition was in circulation, the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem for the most part remained there until the very outbreak of the Jewish War of 66-70 A.D. Eusebius in his *Church History* says that at that time, in obedience to a divine revelation, they moved to Pella in Trans-Jordan. This saying was formulated by Christians who thought of Christ primarily as the heavenly “Son of man.” (IB)

Verse 24:

The persecution of the disciples is explained by a cryptic reference to the passion of Jesus. The saying is preserved in nearly identical form in John 13:16; 15:20, referring both to the washing of the feet, which is symbolic of humility recommended to the disciples, and (as here) to the hatred incurred by the disciples (see also Luke 6:40). Matthew anticipates his own arrangement of the Beelzebul controversy in 12:25-37. (JBC)

Verses 24-25:

Luke 6:40 has a different form of the saying, which probably means: “Even when the disciple is completely educated, he is no greater than his teacher.” Here the thought is that the Christian may not expect to be treated better than his Master was. The principle is valid even in times of relative peace, for courageous following of Christ may at any time result in opposition, and the missionary has no right to demand success. Jesus is elsewhere accused of being in league with Beelzebul; cf. on 12:24. “Master of the house” may be a play on the form “Beelzebul,” which can mean “lord of the house.” (IB)

This part of the discourse is, as the parallels show, composed largely of material drawn from Mark, some of which is used twice; in the eschatological discourse (where Mark puts it) and detached from its context here. Matthew selects and so arranges the material because it is a suitable continuation of the missionary discourse. (JBC)

Summary from LToJC:

Without anticipating the full inquiry into the promise of His immediate coming it is important to avoid at this stage any possible misunderstanding on the matter. The expectation of the coming of the Son of Man was grounded on a prophecy of Daniel (7:13) in which that advent, or rather manifestation, was associated with judgment. The same is the case in this charge of our Lord. The disciples in their work are described as “sheep in the midst of wolves,” a phrase which the Midrash applies to the position of

Israel among a hostile world, adding: How great is that shepherd, who delivers them, and vanquishes the wolves! Similarly, the admonition to “be wise as serpents and harmless as doves” is reproduced in the Midrash where Israel is described as harmless as the dove towards God, and wise as serpents toward the hostile Gentile nations. Such and even greater would be the enmity with the disciples, as the true Israel, would have to encounter from Israel after the flesh. They would be handed over to various Sanhedrin, and visited with such punishments as these tribunals had power to inflict. More than this, they would be brought before governors and kings--primarily, the Roman governors and the Herodian princes. And so determined would be this prosecution, as to break the ties of the closest kinship, and to bring on them the hatred of all men. The only, but the self-sufficient, support in these terrible circumstances was the assurance of such help from above, that, although unlearned and humble, they need have no care, nor make preparation in their defense, which would be given them from above. And with this they had the promise, that he who endured to the end would be saved, and the prudential direction, so far as possible, to avoid persecution by timely withdrawal, which could be the more readily achieved, since they would not have completed their circuit of the cities of Israel before the Son of Man came.

It is of the greatest importance to keep in view that, at whatever period of Christ’s Ministry this prediction and promise was spoken, and whether only once or oftener, they refer exclusively to a Jewish state of things. The persecutions are exclusively Jewish. This appears from verse 18, where the answer of the disciples is promised to be “for a testimony against them,” who had delivered him up, that is, here evidently the Jews, as also against “the Gentiles.” And the evangelistic circuit of the disciples in their preaching was to be primarily Jewish; and not only so, but in time when there were still “cities of Israel,” that is, previous to the final destruction of the Jewish commonwealth. The reference, then, is to that period of Jewish prosecution and of apostolic preaching in the cities of Israel, which is bounded by the destruction of Jerusalem. Accordingly, the “coming of the Son of Man”, and the “end” here spoken of, must also have the same application. It was, as we have seen, according to Daniel 7:13, a coming in judgment. to the Jewish persecuting authorities, who had rejected the Christ, in order, as they imagined, to save their city and temple from the Romans, and to whom Christ had testified that he would come again, this judgment on their city and state, this destruction of their government, was “the coming of the Son of Man” in judgment, and the only coming which the Jews, as a state, could expect.

That this is the only natural meaning attached to this prediction, especially when compared with the parallel utterances recorded in Mark 13:9-13, appears indubitable. It is another question how, or how far, those to whom these words were in the first place addressed would understand their full bearing, at least at that time. Even supposing, that the disciples who first heard did not distinguish between the coming to Israel in judgment, and that to the world in mingled judgment and mercy, as it was afterwards conveyed to them in the parable of the fig-tree (Luke 21:29-31), yet the early Christians must soon have become aware of it. For, the distinction is sharply marked. As regards its manner, the “second” coming of Christ may be said to correspond to the state of those to whom he comes. To the Jews his first coming was *visible*, and as claiming to be their King. They had asked for a sign; and no sign was given them at the

time. They rejected him, and placed the Jewish government and nation in rebellion against “the King.” To the Jews, who so rejected the first visible appearance of Christ as their King, the second appearance would be given them, but as a sign of judgment, and his coming would be the judgment. Thus would his authority be vindicated, and he would appear, not visibly but really, as what he claimed to be. That this was to be the manner and object of his coming to Israel, was clearly set forth to the disciples in the Parable of the unthankful husbandmen (Matthew 21:33-46 and parallels). The coming of the Lord of the vineyard would be the destruction of the wicked husbandmen. And to render misunderstanding impossible, the explanation is immediately added, that the Kingdom of God was to be taken from them, and given to those who would bring forth the fruits thereof. Assuredly, this could not, even in the view of the disciples (which may have been formed on the Jewish model) have applied to the coming of Christ at the end of the present dispensation.

We bear in mind that this second, outwardly invisible but very real, coming of the Son of Man to the Jews, as a state, could only be in judgment on their government, in that “Sign” which was once refused, but which, when it appeared, would only too clearly vindicate His claims and authority. Thus viewed, the passages, in which that second coming is referred to, will yield their natural meaning. Nether the mission of the disciples, nor their journeying through the cities of Israel, was finished, before the Son of Man came. There were those standing there would not taste death, until they had seen in the destruction of the city and state the vindication of the Kingship of Jesus, which Israel had disowned. And even in those last discourses in which the horizon gradually enlarges, and this coming in judgment to Israel merges in the greater judgment on an unbelieving world, this earlier coming to the Jewish nation is clearly marked. The three evangelists record it, that “this generation” should not pass away, until all things are fulfilled” (Matthew 24:34; Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32). The take the lowest view, it is scarcely conceivable that these sayings would have been allowed to stand in all the three gospels, if the disciples and the early church had understood the coming of the Son of Man in any other sense than as to the Jews in the destruction of their government. And it is most significant, that the final utterances of the Lord as to his coming were elicited by questions arising from the predicted destruction of the Temple. This the early disciples associated with the final coming of Christ. To explain more fully the distinction between them would have been impossible, in consistency with the Lord’s general purpose about the doctrine of His coming. Yet the Parables which in the Gospels (especially in that by Matthew) follow on these predictions (Matthew 25:1-30), and the teaching about the final Advent of the “Son of Man” point clearly to a difference and an interval between the one and the other.

The disciples must have the more readily applied this prediction of his coming to Palestine, since “the woes” connected with it so closely corresponded to those expected by the Jews before the Advent of Messiah. Even the direction to flee from persecution is repeated by the Rabbis in similar circumstance and established by the example of Jacob, of Moses, and of David.

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s. COURAGE UNDER PERSECUTION

Matthew 10:26-33

42. Read Matthew 10:26-33 in its entirety.
(1) Luke 12:2-9
43. Read Matthew 10:26
(1) No reference
44. Read Matthew 10:27
(1) Matthew 4:22 (3) I Timothy 5:25
(2) Luke 8:17
45. Read Matthew 10:28
(1) James 4:12
46. Read Matthew 10:29-32
(1) No reference
47. Read Matthew 10:33
(1) Mark 8:38 (3) II Timothy 2:12
(2) Luke 9:26 (4) Revelations 3:5

Matthew 10:26-33

- 26 "Therefore do not be afraid of them. Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known.
- 27 What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops.
- 28 And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.
- 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge.
- 30 Even all the hairs of your head are counted.
- 31 So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.
- 32 Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father.
- 33 But whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my heavenly Father.

This collection of sayings comes from Q (cf. Luke 12:2-9); two verses are found in Mark also. (JBC)

These sayings stood in Q, the first group of them (verses 26-33) containing a threefold refrain (verses 26, 28, 31). Matthew has inserted the refrain at the beginning of verse 26. (IB)

Verse 26:

This seems to assume that Jesus' teaching was not widely known until after the

Crucifixion. He may originally have meant: “The message now seems to reach only a few, but God will see to it that it has great effect.” (IB)

Verse 27:

Rabbis often “whispered” to their disciples certain secret doctrines such as the interpretation of Ezekiel 1; but Jesus’ teaching is not esoteric. Therefore the meaning must be: “That which is now taught in small groups must be proclaimed widely.” This is the idea of Luke 12:3. (IB)

Verses 26-27:

These verses have a different context from Luke 12:2-3 and quite a different meaning; the saying in Mark 4:22 is closer to the meaning given by Matthew. Luke has made the line a warning against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees; it is impossible that “you” should say anything in secret that will not become public; you cannot hide your real mind. Matthew refers the saying to the teaching of Jesus. The teaching now reaches only a limited circle, but through the disciples it will be widely published. The saying does not imply that Jesus taught a secret doctrine, but simply that the number who hear his teaching from his own lips is much smaller than the number who will hear it from the disciples. (JBC)

Verse 28:

The discourse moves on to a saying in which the prospect of death is stated even more clearly than in the preceding section. The dualism of body and soul is unusual in the NT and does not represent the OT conception of the human person. It is remarkable that Luke, presumably a Hellenistic writer, avoids the dualism in his version of the saying: the dualism would be quite germane to several schools of Greek philosophy. (JBC)

[who can destroy ... in Gehenna](#) -- God is the “who” in this verse. There is a life after one’s earthly life that must be preserved. (JBC)

The one “who can destroy both soul and body in hell; that is, in Gehenna, is probably God. Although it was believed that evil men and Satan could tempt one and so lead one to destruction, only God could pronounce the sentence to Gehenna; cf. Wisdom of Solomon 16:13-15; James 4:12. The saying merely teaches that God is omnipotent, and no special emphasis on the severity of his judgment need be intended. This and the following sayings have martyrdom in mind. (IB)

Verse 29:

God has as much care for the human person as he has for the sparrow, which was one of the cheapest articles sold in the market. God knows when even a small bird dies; he is ware of the death of one of his own, and he will save the life that endures after death. The variant form of the saying in Luke 21:18 is about the hairs of the head. (JBC)

Diocletian of the early fourth century fixed a price for sparrows which was not much higher. In this context, the verse refers to the death of a sparrow. It has been suggested that the Aramaic saying may have been even stronger: “Not a sparrow alights on the ground, etc.” (IB)

Verse 30:

Like several of Jesus’ sayings, this is hyperbolic. It emphasizes God’s constant and personal care for all of his creation. The expression “hairs of your head” may come from I Samuel 14:45. (IB)

Verse 31:

The same meaning is found in 6:30. (IB)

Verses 32-33:

In Luke 12:8-9, which is probably the Q form of the saying, it is the Son of man who will acknowledge or repudiate men in the divine judgment, and Jesus does not explicitly identify himself with that figure. But there, as well as here, what is important is witnessing to Jesus. This introduces a new idea, for in verses 1, 7-8 the disciples are to heal and to proclaim the kingdom of God rather than the Messiah. Matthew and John often quote Jesus as speaking of God as “my Father”; Luke only infrequently. (IB)

Verse 32:

With this assurance of confidence that God knows and cares what happens, the disciples are urged to confess “in Jesus”; the confession would be the typical confession of the primitive church that Jesus is Messiah and Lord. The reward of confession or denial is that Jesus will accept or disown according to one’s fidelity. A similar saying appears in Mark 8:38 (Luke 9:26 parallel); but the formulation is so dissimilar that it is difficult to assume a common source, unless Matthew has rewritten with great freedom. These sayings are also suitable appendages to the missionary discourse. (JBC)

Summary from LToJC:

In this section of the discourse of our Lord, as reported by Matthew, the horizon is enlarged. The statements are still primarily applicable to the early disciples, and their preaching among the Jews and in Palestine. But their ultimate bearing is already wider, and include predictions and principles true to all time. In view of the treatment which their Master received, the disciples must expect misrepresentation and evil-speaking. Nor could it seem strange to them, since even the common Rabbinic proverb had it: “It is enough for a servant to be as his lord.” As we hear it from the lips of Jesus, we remember that this saying afterwards comforted those, who mourned the downfall of wealthy and liberal homes in Israel, by thoughts of the greater calamity which had overthrown Jerusalem and the Temple. And very significant is its application by Jesus: “If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebul, how much more them of his household. This charge, brought of course by the Pharisaic party of Jerusalem, had a double significance. Edersheim believes that the expression “Master of the house” looked back to the claims which Jesus had made on His first purification of the Temple. We almost seem to hear the coarse Rabbinic witticism in its play on the word *Beelzebul*. For *-zebul* in Rabbinic language, not any ordinary dwelling, but specifically the Temple, and *Beel-Zebul* would be the Master of the Temple. On the other hand, *-zibbul* means sacrificing to idols; and hence *Beel-zebul* would, in that sense, be equivalent to “lord” or “chief of idolatrous sacrificing”--the worst and chiefest of demons, who presided over, and incited to idolatry. “The Lord of the Temple” (which truly was His church) was to them “the chief of idolatrous worship,” the Representative of God that of the worst of demons: Beelzebul was Beelzibbul! What then might “his household” expect at their hands?

But they were not fear such misrepresentations. In due time the Lord would make manifest both His and their true character (Matthew 10:26). Nor were they to be deterred from announcing in the clearest and most public manner, in broad daylight, and from the flat roofs of houses, that which had been first told them in the darkness, as Jewish teachers communicated the deepest and highest doctrines in secret to their disciples, or as

the preacher would whisper his discourse into the ear of an interpreter. The deepest truths concerning His Person, and the announcement of His Kingdom and Work, were to be fully revealed, and loudly proclaimed. But, from a much higher point of view, how different was the teaching of Christ, from that of the Rabbis! The latter laid it down as a principle, which they tried to prove from Scripture, that in order to save one's life, it was not only lawful, but even their duty--if necessary, to commit any kind of sin, except idolatry, incest, or murder. Nay, even idolatry was allowed, but only if it were done in secret so as not to profane the name of the Lord. If one profaned the name of the Lord death was infinitely preferable. Christ, on the other hand, not only ignored this vicious Jewish distinction of public and private as regarded morality, but bade His followers set aside all regard for personal safety, even in reference to the duty of preaching the Gospel. There was a higher fear than of men: that of God--and it should drive out the fear of those who could only kill the body. Besides, why fear? God's Providence extended even over the meanest of His creatures. Two sparrows cost only about one-third of a penny. Yet even one of them would not perish without the knowledge of God. No illustration was more familiar to the Jewish mind than that of His watchful care even over the sparrows. The beautiful allusion in Amos 3:5 was somewhat realistically carried out in a legend which occurs in more than one Rabbinic passage. We are told that, after that great miracle-worker of Jewish legend, R. Simeon be Jochai, had been for thirteen years in hiding from his persecutors in a cave, where he was miraculously fed, he observed that, when the bird-catcher laid his trap, the bird escaped, or was caught, according as a voice from heaven proclaimed, "Mercy," or else, "destruction." Arguing, that if even a sparrow could not be caught without heaven's bidding, how much more safe was the life of a son of man, he came forth.

Nor could even the additional promise of Christ: "But of you even the hairs of the head are all numbered" (which is a literal rendering), surprise his disciples. But it would convey to them the gladsome assurance that, in doing His work, they were performing the Will of God, and were specially in His keeping. And it would carry home to them--with the comfort of a very different application, while engaging in doing the work and will of God--what Rabbinism expressed in a realistic manner by the common sayings, that whither a man was to go, thither his feet would carry him; and, that a man could not injure his finger on earth, unless it had been so decreed of him in heaven. And in later Rabbinic writings we read, in almost the words of Christ: "Do I not number all the hairs of every creature?" And yet an even higher outlook was opened to the disciples. All preaching was confessing, and all confessing a preaching of Christ; and our confession or denial would, almost by a law of nature, meet with similar confession or denial on the part of Christ before His Father in heaven. This, also, was an application of that fundamental principle, that "nothing is covered that shall not be revealed," which, indeed, extended to the inmost secrets of heart and life.

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t. JESUS: A CAUSE OF DIVISION

Matthew 10:34-36

48. Read Matthew 10:34-36 in its entirety.
(1) Luke 12:51-53

Matthew 10:34-36

- 34 "Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth. I have come to bring
not peace but the sword.
35 For I have come to set a man 'against his father, a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
36 and one's enemies will be those of his household.'

The parallel in Luke 12:51-53 exhibits so many variations that some commentators doubt a common source for the saying; in particular, Luke replaces the vigorous metaphor of the sword with an abstraction. (JBC)

Verse 34:

Do not think that I have come to bring peace -- Jesus is of course the messenger of peace in the truest and highest sense of the word; the saying reflects the experience of the primitive church. The immediate result of the proclamation of the gospel was discord within the Jewish community, which touched even family relations. The same theme is expressed in the words of Simeon (Luke 2:34). The saying is illustrated by the quotation of Micah 7:6 (according to the LXX, but quite faithful to the MT). The lines lead to the saying in the following verse. (JBC)

The basic ideas are the same as in the parallel Luke 12:51-53, although the wording is different. Jesus regarded the truth as more important than temporary harmony in the family or the community, and never regarded the family or the social order as an end in itself. Only the kingdom of God was ultimate (6:33). The rabbis and apocalyptic writers believed that the days of the Messiah would be ushered in by wars and family strife. The Jewish "daughter-in-law" was expected to obey the "mother-in-law." The saying is based on Micah 7:6. One scholar uses these verses as an illustration of the almost intolerable tension which arises in society when a creative genius comes forward. Ordinary men and women must either oppose him or -- at great cost to themselves -- accept his new order. (IB)

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u. THE CONDITIONS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Matthew 10:37-39

49. Read Matthew 10:37-39 in its entirety.
(1) Matthew 16:24-25 (2) Luke 14:26-27
50. Read Matthew 10:37-38
(1) No reference
51. Read Matthew 10:39
(1) Mark 8:35 (3) John 12:25

Matthew 10:37-39

- 37 "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever
loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;
38 and whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me.
39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find
it.

Cf. Luke 14:26-27 and 17:33; see Mark 8:34-35; Luke 9:23-24. (JBC)

If the gospel introduces a division into families, then the disciple has no choice except to prefer the new community to the community of blood. Matthew softens "hate," found in Luke, to "love more"; the language of Luke is closer to the original Aramaic, which has not other way of saying "love less." The example of this renunciation has already been given in the call of the disciples (4:18-22; 9:9-13). (JBC)

Verse 37:

Luke 14:26 expresses the principle in more extreme language; cf. also Matthew 12:46-50. According to the Mishnah, a man must honor God and the law more than his teacher, and his teacher more than his father. (IB)

Verses 38-39:

Two sayings are joined that Luke has in different contexts; but Luke, like Matthew, uses the sayings twice (16:24-25). Here again, as in other parts of the discourse, Matthew has used doublets to compile his material. Mark also has the sayings; and the verses are a rare example of saying found both in Mark and in Q. The very fact that they are quoted so often shows that the early church, like the modern church, recognizes these as sayings that express in a remarkably clear manner a basic principle of the gospel and of Christian life. (JBC)

Verse 38:

take up his cross -- This is the first time that Matthew uses the word "cross." Other allusions (some have appeared already) to the passion will be found before Jesus predicts it openly. Crucifixion, a method of execution of Oriental origin, was used by the Romans for rebels and for slaves. Roman law prohibited its use on Roman citizens. The conventional use of the cross as a Christian symbol makes it difficult for modern readers to grasp the harshness of this saying as it was originally uttered. Jesus tells the disciples that here is no extreme to which they may think that faith and the proclamation of the gospel will not take them. The personal renunciation implied will go far beyond the renunciation of one's own family. (JBC)

A condemned man had to "take his cross" and carry it (cf. 27:32; John 19:17)-- not the entire cross, but the crossbeam which would later be fixed to the stake. If Jesus and his followers were to be taken for revolutionaries and arrested by the Romans, this kind of death was possible, and they made their last journey to Jerusalem in the consciousness of this danger. However, the words "and let him take up his cross" are omitted from the parallel passage, Mark 8:34, in the newly discovered Codex 2427, which is related to Vaticanus and other Alexandrian manuscripts. (IB)

Verse 39:

The oxymoron assures the disciples that there is no other way in which they can save themselves. The Aramaic word for “soul” is used here in a sense that reflects the OT use. The word should be rendered “self” rather than “soul” or “life.” The preservation of the person is achieved only by yielding the person entirely to Jesus. One who saves his life may lose himself. (JBC)

He who risks his life and hands it over to God will share in the life of the world to come, whether martyrdom is his lot or not; but cowardice is certain death for the soul. Luke 17:33 does not contain the words “for my sake.” (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

In this part of our Lord’s discourse, the horizon is widened still further. It describes the condition and laws of His Kingdom, until the final revelation of that which is now covered and hidden. So long as His claims were set before a hostile world they could only provoke war. On the other hand, so long as such decision was necessary, in the choice of either those nearest and dearest, of ease of life itself, or else of Christ, there could be no compromise. Not that, as is sometimes erroneously supposed, a very great degree of love to the dearest on earth amounts to loving them more than Christ. No degree of proper affection can ever make affection wrongful, even as no diminution of it could make wrongful affection right. The love which Christ condemned differs not in degree, but in kind, from rightful affection. It is one which takes the place of love to Christ--not which is placed by the side of Christ. For, rightly viewed, the two occupy different provinces. Wherever and whenever the two affections come into comparison, they also come into collision. And so the questions of not being worthy of Him (and who can be positively worthy?), and of the true finding or losing of our life, have their bearing on our daily life and profession. The meaning of the expression, losing and finding one’s life, appears more markedly by attending to the tenses in the text: “He that found his life shall lose it, and he that lost his life for my sake shall find it.”

But even in this respect the disciples must, to some extent, have been prepared to receive the teaching of Christ. It was generally expected, that a time of great tribulation would precede the Advent of the Messiah. Again, it was a Rabbinic axiom, that the cause of the Teacher, to whom a man owed eternal life, was to be taken in hand before that of his father, to whom he owed only the life of this world (especially if he taught him the highest of all lore, the Talmud, or explained the reason or the meaning of what it contained). Even the statement about taking up the cross in following Christ, although prophetic, could not sound quite strange. Crucifixion was, indeed, not a Jewish punishment, but the Jews must have become sadly familiar with it. The Targum speaks of it as one the four modes of execution which Naomi described to Ruth as those in custom in Palestine, the other three being--stoning, burning, and beheading. Indeed, the expression “bearing the cross”, as indicative of sorrow and suffering, is so common, that we read, Abraham carried for the wood for the sacrifice of Isaac, “like one who bears his cross on his shoulder.”

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Matthew 10:40-42
Matthew 11:1

52. Read Matthew 10:40-42 and Matthew 11:1 in its entirety.
(1) No reference
53. Read Matthew 10:40
(1) Luke 10:16 (3) John 13:20
(2) John 12:44
54. Read Matthew 10:41
(1) No reference
55. Read Matthew 10:42
(1) Matthew 25:40 (2) Mark 9:41
56. Read Matthew 11:1
(1) No reference

Matthew 10:40-42 and Matthew 11:1

- 40 "Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.
- 41 Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever receives a righteous man because he is righteous will receive a righteous man's reward.
- 42 And whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink because he is a disciple--amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward."
- 1 When Jesus finished giving these commands to his twelve disciples, he went away from that place to teach and to preach in their towns.

The final words of the discourse express praise of those who show the disciples hospitality. The praise is based on the identification of the disciples with Jesus; he is encountered in those who proclaim the gospel. The saying is adapted from Mark 9:37 (see Luke 9:48; Matthew 18:5); it is another doublet. (JBC)

Verse 40:

This saying concluded the discourse in Q (cf. Luke 10:16; Mark 9:37). It is one of a number of sayings in which Jesus speaks definitely of his mission and purpose and uses such phrases as "I am come". These are relatively infrequent in the old dialogues and sayings groups of the Synoptic Gospels but appear everywhere in John; and specialists are not agreed as to how many of them are historical. Early Christians believed, of course, that Jesus has been "sent" with full authority, and the Jewish rule applied that "a man's emissary is like the man himself". The noun "apostle" is derived from the Greek verb used here. Parallels to this verse can be found in John 13:29; Didache 11:1'; 12:1. (IB)

Verses 41-42:

Three groups seem to be distinguished: prophets, righteous men (who perhaps are tested and honored Christians), and little ones or ordinary disciples. The Christian “prophet” is frequently mentioned, and his powers and functions are similar to those of an apostle (e.g. Acts 11:27; 13:1-3; I Corinthians 12:28; Didache 11:3-12). But there is no distinction as regards the “reward,” which, as Chrysostom said, is eternal life. “A cup of cold water” is a proverbial expression for a minor service. As in the parable of the last judgment (25:31-46), Matthew concludes an important section by emphasizing the need for practical loving-kindness. This is the final result and test of discipleship. (IB)

Verse 42:

little ones -- The “child” of Mark’s saying becomes the plural and refers here to the disciples; they are told to become as little ones in 18:1-4. A similar saying is found in Luke 10:6. The saying about the cup of cold water (Mark 9:41) is aptly placed here because of its association with hospitality. (JBC)

Verse 1:

This verse narrates that Jesus continued his teaching and proclaiming. The mission of the twelve “disciples” is not mentioned again, nor is their return from their mission; the discourse has a somewhat artificial character and situation. (JBC)

This verse, like 7:28-29, marks the conclusion of one of the major sections of Matthew’s Gospel. One would expect that at this point the disciples would go out and preach, but Matthew perhaps believed that the disciples did not begin their mission until after the Resurrection (28:19-20). At any rate, he makes no mention of their experiences as evangelists or of their return from the mission. (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

The disciples could not have been in any doubt as to the meaning of this last part of Christ’s address. They were old Jewish forms of thought, only filled with the new wine of the Gospel. The Rabbis taught, only in extravagant terms, the merit attaching to the reception and entertainment of sages. The very expression “in the name of” a prophet, or a righteous man, is strictly Jewish and means for the sake of, or with intention, to regard to. It appears to us, that Christ introduced His own distinctive teaching by the admitted Jewish principle, that hospitable reception for the sake of, or with the intention of doing it to, a prophet or a righteous man, would procure a share in the prophet’s or righteous man’s reward. Thus, tradition had it, that the Obadiah of King Ahab’s court (I Kings 18:4) had become the prophet of that name, because he had provided for the hundred prophets. And we are repeatedly assured, that to receive a sage, or even an elder, was like receiving the Shekinah itself. But the concluding promise of Christ, concerning the reward of even “a cup of cold water” to “one of these little ones” “in the name of a disciple,” goes far beyond the farthest conception of his contemporaries. Yet, even so, the expression would, so far as its form is concerned, perhaps bear a fuller meaning to them than to us. Those “little ones” were “the children”, who were still learning the elements of knowledge, and who would eventually grow into “disciples.” For, as the Midrash has it: “Where there are no little ones, there are no disciples; and where no disciples, no sages; where no sages, there no elders; where no elders, there no prophets; and where no prophets, there does God not cause the Shekinah to rest.

We have been so particular in marking the Jewish parallelisms in this discourse,

first, because it seemed important to show, that the words of the Lord were not beyond the comprehension of the disciples. Starting from forms of thought and expressions with which they were familiar, He carried them far beyond Jewish ideas and hopes. But, secondly, it is just in this similarity of form, which proves that it was of the time and to the time, as well as to us and to all times, that we best see, how far the teaching of Christ transcended all contemporary conception.

But the reality, the genuineness, the depth and the fervor of self-surrender, which Christ expects, is met by equal fullness of acknowledgment on His part, alike in heaven and on earth. In fact, there is absolute identification with His ambassadors on the part of Christ. As He is the ambassador of the Father, so are they His, and as such also the ambassadors of the Father. To receive them was, therefore, not only to receive Christ, but the Father, who would own the humblest, even the meanest service of love to one of the learners, "the little ones." All the more painful is the contrast of Jewish pride and self-righteousness, which attributes supreme merit to ministering, not as to God, but as to man; not for God's sake, but for that of the man; a pride which could give utterance to such a saying as: "All the prophets have announced salvation only to the like of those who give their daughters in marriage to sages, or cause them to make gain, or give of their goods to them. But what the bliss of the sages themselves is, no mortal eye has seen."

It was not with such sayings that Jesus sent forth His disciples; nor in such spirit, that the world has been subdued to Him. The relinquishing of all that is nearest and dearest, cross-bearing, loss of life itself--such were the terms of His discipleship. Yet acknowledgment there would surely be: (1) in the felt and assured sense of His Presence, and then (2) in the reward of a prophet, a righteous man, or, it might be, a disciple. But all was to be in Him, and for Him, even the gift of "a cup of cold water" to "a little one." Nay, neither the "little ones", the learners, nor the cup of cold water given them, would be overlooked or forgotten. In such a way as this, Jesus cast the loftiness of His Humility.

While the apostles went forth by two and two on their first mission, Jesus Himself taught and preached in the towns around Capernaum (Matthew 11:1). This period of undisturbed activity seems, however, to have been of brief duration. That it was eminently successful, we infer not only from the direct notices, but also from the circumstance that, for the first time, the attention of Herod Antipas was now called to the Person of Jesus.

Session 21

s. DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST Spring, 29 AD

Mark 6:21-29
Matthew 14:6-12

1. Read Mark 6:21-29 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference
2. Read Mark 6:21-22
(1) No reference
3. Read Mark 6:23
(1) Esther 5:3
4. Read Mark 6:24-26
(1) No reference
5. Read Mark 6:27-28
(1) Luke 9:9
6. Read Mark 6:29
(1) No reference

Mark 6:21-29

- 21 She [Herodias] had an opportunity one day when Herod, on his birthday, gave a banquet for his courtiers, his military officers, and the leading men of Galilee.
- 22 Herodias's own daughter came in and performed a dance that delighted Herod and his guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask of me whatever you wish and I will grant it to you."
- 23 He even swore (many things) to her, "I will grant you whatever you ask of me, even to half of my kingdom."
- 24 She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the Baptist."
- 25 The girl hurried back to the king's presence and made her request, "I want you to give me at once on a platter the head of John the Baptist."
- 26 The king was deeply distressed, but because of his oaths and the guests he did not wish to break his word to her.
- 27 So he promptly dispatched an executioner with orders to bring back his head. He went off and beheaded him in the prison.
- 28 He brought in the head on a platter and gave it to the girl. The girl in turn gave it to her mother.

29 When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

Verbal contacts show that the Baptist's death is retold in the light of the story of Esther. (JBC)

Verse 21:

Herod ... gave a banquet -- Cf. Esther 1:3 (LXX) "[King Xerxes] gave a feast for his friends, and the other nations, and to the notables of the Persians and Medes, and the chief of the Satraps." (JBC)

Where the banquet was held is not stated: the distant border fortress of Machaerus was unlikely, if the Galilean guests were to attend; more probably it was the city of Tiberius, although Josephus states that John was imprisoned and put to death at Machaerus. (IB)

Verse 22:

Herodias's ... daughter came in -- Cf. Esther 2:15, 16. (JBC)
performed a dance that delighted Herod and his guests. -- Cf. Esther 2:9 (JBC)
"unto the half of my kingdom" was a proverbial expression (cf. I Kings 13:8; Esther 5:3; 7:2). The king tricked by his own oath is a favorite motif in legend. (IB)

Verse 23:

even to half of my kingdom -- Cf. Esther 5:3; 7:2 The frequent references to Herod as "the king" (6:22, 25-27) recall the same manner of referring to Xerxes in Esther. (JBC)

Verse 27:

dispatched an executioner with orders -- In other versions: "sent a guard with orders". Cf. Esther 1:8; 8:11. (JBC)

"executioner" (KJV) is better rendered as "soldier of the guard" (RSV). But the Latin word from the manuscripts is found only here in the NT, and could in Latin also mean "executioner." John's "disciples" have already been mentioned (2:18). Later legend located the tomb at Samaria, but this is quite improbable. (IB)

Verse 29:

[His {John's}] **disciples ... came and took his body and laid it in a tomb** -- A foreshadowing of Jesus' burial (15:45-46). This closing verse corresponds to the opening verse, 6:16b. Taken together, the two verses anticipate 16:6, and by thus alluding to Jesus' resurrection bring out the irony of Herod's statement in 6:16a. (JBC)

In summary, Mark has presented the Baptist's death in terms colored by the story of Esther: by developing the parallelism between John and Jesus, he has made it into an anticipation of Jesus' own fate. For other instance of this parallelism, cf. 1:14; 9:11-13. (JBC)

Verse 30: {not a part of this section of reading, but notes will be worthwhile when we precede to the next section of this lesson)

30 The apostles gathered together with Jesus and reported all they had done and taught.

[The return of the apostles is mentioned in verse 30, which closes the section begun at 6:7. This is the only place in Mark where the Twelve are called "apostles," Mark's usual name for them being "disciples." But have just spoken of "his {John's}

disciples” in 6:29, he was forced, for clarity’s sake, to use another word for the Twelve, and since in 3:14 and 6:7 Jesus “sends them out” (*apostellei*), Mark here calls them *apostoloi*. Here the word means simply “those sent out” rather than “apostles,” for the latter term had acquired a technical meaning by the time Mark wrote, which is not fully applicable to the Twelve before Pentecost.

“told him what they had done and taught”--The whole of 6:30 is absent from Matthew, where 14:12-13 has a more natural sequence of events. Jesus’ retreat to the desert is clearly motivated by Herod’s murder of John; in addition, the notice that the disciples had “taught” is at variance with the Synoptic tradition regarding the nature of their mission, which is to proclaim repentance (Mark 6:12-13, and the coming of God’s kingdom (Matthew 10:7; Luke 9:1; 10:9). Mark 6 30b represents a postresurrectional viewpoint (cf. Acts 4:2, 18; 2:42). -- JBC]

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7. Read Matthew 14:6-12 in its entirety one time.
 - (1) No reference

Matthew 14:6-12

- 6 But at a birthday celebration for Herod, the daughter of Herodias performed a dance before the guests and delighted Herod
- 7 so much that he swore to give her whatever she might ask for.
- 8 Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist."
- 9 The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and the guests who were present, he ordered that it be given,
- 10 and he had John beheaded in the prison.
- 11 His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who took it to her mother.
- 12 His disciples came and took away the corpse and buried him; and they went and told Jesus.

In both Mark (6:17-29) and Matthew this incident is strangely parenthetical, inserted almost as an afterthought to explain the words of Herod. Matthew has abbreviated Mark very sharply. (JBC)

In verse 5, the desire to kill John has been transferred from Herodias to Herod, and Herod’s fear has been transferred from John to the crowd; and there is no mention of Herod’s willingness to hear John. These alterations have the result of making Herod look even still blacker. (JBC)

Verse 6:

The only “daughter of Herodias” known to history is Salome, who married Philip and later her cousin Aristobulus. Oriental parties were usually for men only. While the Herods were lax in their morals, it would have been exceptional for a princess to dance before such a company. At the time when this occurred, she may already have been married to Philip. (IB)

Verse 8:

The exchange between the daughter and the mother in Mark 6:24 is omitted, probably to make the narrative run faster. (JBC)

Mark tells a much more detailed and lively story. The “platter” is a gruesome detail that the girl thought up without her mother’s prompting. (IB)

Verse 12:

they went and told Jesus -- This is an addition by Matthew, which not only establishes a clearer connection between the death of John and the departure of Jesus from Galilee, Herod’s territory, but also makes Jesus more explicitly the successor of John. (JBC)

Mark 6:29 recounts the burial by John’s disciples. Mark 6:30 tells how the apostles returned from their mission and reported to Jesus. Matthew combines the two verses. He considers it appropriate that John’s “disciples” should not report to the great successor of their master, and this furnishes an added reason for Jesus to leave the place where he was (verse 13). (IB)

According to Josephus (*Antiquities*. 18. 5. 2.), the scene of the murder was the palace-fortress of Machaerus. He also informs us that the name of the daughter was Salome. According to Josephus, the scandal was less in the degree of kinship than in the open adultery that preceded the divorces. The execution of John was so barbarous and so lawless that a number of historians have questioned the historical character of the details. But the incident is quite in accord with the nature of the house of Herod as it is described by Josephus, our only witness--and, it must be confessed, a deeply prejudiced witness. (JBC)

Herod Antipas (4 B.C. - 39 A.D.), the younger son of Malthace, inherited Galilee and Perea as a tetrach (a petty prince who ruled over a fourth part of a territory; so Luke 3:2, 19; Matthew 14:1. But Mark 6:14 calls him “king”). He built for himself a magnificent capital at Tiberias on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, naming it in honor of the emperor. Herod Antipas also had some of his father’s traits: He was vainglorious, indolent, hostile, and crafty (Luke 13:32, “that fox”). He knew how to court Rome’s favor. After marrying the daughter of the Nabatean king Aretas IV, he repudiated her in favor of Herodias, the wife of his half-brother Herod, the son of Mariamme II (Josephus’ *Antiquities*. 18. 5.4.; Luke 3:19). In Matthew 14:3 ; Mark 6:17 Herodias appears as the wife of “Philip”. Since this cannot be Philip the tetrach, whose wife was Salome III, the daughter of Herodias and Herod, commentators often suppose that Herod, the, the husband of Herodias, had the surname Philip; but this supposition is not otherwise attested. John the Baptist was executed by Herod Antipas over this affair (Mark 6:17-29; Matthew 14:3-12; Josephus *Antiquities*. 18. 5, 2.). The repudiation of King Aretas’ daughter brought guerrilla warfare to Herod Antipas’ land; and when the Roman legate in Syrai (Vitellius) failed to help him, Herod was defeated by Aretas in 37 A.D. The emperor Caligula finally exiled him to Lyons (39 A.D.) after 42 years reign. (JBC)

Summary from LToJC:

We are again at Machaerus. According to Josephus, John was executed at Machaerus, the scene must have been there, and not either at Tiberius or at Julias. Weeks have passed since the return of John’s messengers. John must have known that his end

was at hand, and been ready to be offered up. Those not infrequent conversations, in which the weak, superstitious, wicked tyrant was “perplexed” and yet “heard him gladly”, could not longer have inspired even passing hopes of freedom. Nor would he any longer expect from the Messiah assertions of power on his behalf. He now understood that for which he had come, he knew the better liberty, triumph, and victory which He brought. And what did it matter? His life-work had been done, and there was nothing further that fell to him or that he could do, and the weary servant of the Lord must have longed for his rest.

It was early spring, shortly before the Passover, the anniversary of the death of Herod the Great and of the accession of (his son) Herod Antipas to the tetrarchy. The Aramaic expression used here leaves it doubtful whether it was the birthday of Herod or the anniversary of his accession. One scholar maintains that the Rabbinic equivalent means the day of accession, yet another scholar maintains that it means the birthday. In truth it is used for both. The event described in the text certainly took place before the Passover, and this was the time of Herod’s death and the accession of Antipas. It is not likely, that the Herodians would have celebrated their birthdays. This was a fit time for a Belshazzar-feast, when such a one as Herod would gather to a grand banquet his lords, and the military authorities, and the chief men of Galilee. It is evening, and the castle-palace is brilliantly lit up. The noise of music and revelry come across the slope into the citadel, and fall into the deep dungeon where awaits the prisoner of Christ. And now the merriment in the great banqueting-hall reached its utmost height. The king has nothing further to offer his satiated guests, no fresh excitement. So let it be the sensuous stimulus of dubious dances, and to complete it, let the dancer be the fair young daughter of the king’s wife, the very descendant of the Asmonean priest-princes! To viler depth of coarse familiarity even a Herod could not have descended.

She has come, and she has danced. This princely maiden, out of whom all maidenhood and all princeliness have been brazed by a degenerate mother, retched offspring of the once noble Maccabees. And she has done her best in that wretched exhibition, and pleased Herod and them that sat at the meal with him. And now, amidst the general plaudits, she shall have her reward--and the king swears it to her with loud voice, that all around hear it--even to half of his kingdom. The maiden steals out of the banquet-hall to ask her mother what it shall be. Can there be doubt or hesitation in the mind of Herodias? If there was one object she had at heart, which these ten months she had in vain sought to attain: it was the death of John the Baptist. The daughter of Aristobulus, the ill-fated son of the ill-fated Asmonaeon princess Mariamme I, she had been married to her half-uncle, Herod Philip, the son of Herod the Great and of Mariamme II, the daughter of the high-priest, Boethos. {From the circumstance that Josephus calls him Herod and not Philip, a certain class of critics have imputed error to the evangelists. But it requires to be kept in view, that in that case the evangelists would be guilty not of one but of two gross historical errors. They would (1) have confounded this Herod with his half-brother Philip, the tetrarch, and (2) made him the husband of Herodias, instead of being her son-in-law, Philip the tetrarch having married Salome. Two such events are altogether inconceivable in so well-known a history, with which the evangelists otherwise show such familiarity. On the other hand, there are internal reasons for believing that his Herod a second name. Among the eight sons of Herod the Great

there are three who beard his name (Herod). Of only one, Herod Antipas, we know the second name (Antipas). But, as for example in the case of the Bonaparte family, it is most unlikely that the other two should have borne the name of Herod without any distinctive second name. Hence we conclude, that the name Philip, which occurs in the gospels (in Luke 3:19, it is spurious), was the second name of him whom Josephus simply names as Herod. If it is objected, that in such case Herod would have had two sons named Philip, we answer (1) that he had two sons of the name Antipas, or Antipater, and (2) that they were the sons of different mothers, and (3) that the full name of the one was Herod Philip (the first husband of Herodias), and of the other simply Philip the tetrarch (husband of Salome, and son-in-law of Herodias and of Herod Philip her first husband). Thus for distinction's sake the one might have been generally called simply Herod, the other Philip.} At one time it seemed as if Herod Philip would have been sole heir to his father's dominions. But the old tyrant had changed his testament, and Philip was left with great wealth, but as a private person living in Jerusalem. This little suited the woman's ambition. It was when his half-brother, Herod Antipas, came on a visit to him at Jerusalem, that an intrigue began between the tetrarch and his brother's wife. It was agreed that, after the return of Antipas from his impending journey to Rome, he would repudiate his wife, the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia, and wed Herodias. But Aretas' daughter heard of the plot, and having obtained her husband's consent to go to Machaerus, she fled to her father instead. This, of course, led to enmity between Antipas and Aretas. Nevertheless, the adulterous marriage with Herodias followed. In a few sentences the story may be carried to its termination. The woman proved the curse and ruin of Antipas. First came the murder of the Baptist, which sent a thrill of horror through the people, and to which all the later misfortunes of Herod were attributed. Then followed a war with Aretas, in which the tetrarch was worsted. And, last of all, his wife's ambition led him to Rome to solicit the title of king, lately given to Agrippa, the brother of Herodias. Antipas not only failed, but was deprived of his dominions, and banished to Lyons in Gaul. The pride of the woman in refusing favors from the Emperor, and her faithfulness to her husband in his fallen fortunes, are the only redeeming points in her history. As for Salome, she was first married to her uncle Philip the tetrarch. Legend has it, that her death was retributive, being in consequence of a fall on the ice.

Such was the woman who had these many months sought with her vengefulness and determination of a Jezebel, to rid herself of the hated person, who alone had dared publicly denounce her sin, and whose words held her weak husband in awe. The opportunity had now come for obtaining from the vacillating monarch what her entreaties could never have secured. As the Gospel puts it, "instigated" by her mother, the damsel hesitated not. We can readily fill in the outlined picture of what followed. It only needed the mother's whispered suggestion, and still flushed from her dance, Salome re-entered the banquet hall. "With haste" as if no time were to be lost, she went up to the king: "I would that thou forthwith give me in a charger, the head of John the Baptist." Silence must have fallen on the assembly. Even into their hearts such a demand from the lips of little more than a child must have struck horror. They all knew John to be righteous and holy man. Wicked as they were, in their superstition, if not religiousness, few if any of them, would have willingly lent himself to such work. And they all knew, also, why Salome, or rather Herodias, had made this demand. What would Herod do? "The king

was exceeding sorry.” For months he had striven against this. His conscience, fear of the people, inward horror at the deed, all would have kept him from it. But he had sworn to the maiden, who now stood before him, claiming that the pledge be redeemed, and every eye in the assembly was fixed upon him. Unfaithful to his God, to his conscience, to truth and righteousness; not ashamed of any crime or sin, he would yet be faithful to his half-drunken oath, and appear honorable and true before such companions.

“Straightway” the king gives the order to one of the bodyguard. The specific Aramaic word used here means one of a bodyguard which had come into use, who attended the Caesars, executed their behests and often their sudden sentences of death. The same word occurs in Rabbinic Hebrew and is applied to one who carries out the sentence of execution. The maiden hath withdrawn to await the result with her mother. The guardsman has left the banqueting-hall. Out into the cold spring night, up that slope, and into the deep dungeon. As its doors opens, the noise of the revelry comes with the light of the torch which the man bears. No time for preparation is given, nor needed. A few minutes more, and the gory head of the Baptist is brought to the maiden in a charger, and she gives the ghastly dish to her mother.

It is all over. As the pale morning light streams into the keep, the faithful disciples, who had been told of it, come reverently to bear the headless body to the burying. They go forth forever from that accursed place, which is so soon to become a mass of shapeless ruins. They go to tell it to Jesus, and henceforth to remain with him. We can imagine what welcome awaited them. But the people ever afterwards cursed the tyrant, and looked for those judgments of God to follow, which were so soon to descend on him. And he himself was ever afterwards restless, wretched, and full of apprehensions. He could scarcely believe that the Baptist was really dead, and when the fame of Jesus reached him, and those around him suggested that this was Elijah, a prophet, or as one of them, Herod’s mind, amidst its strange perplexities, still reverted to the man whom he had murdered. It was a new anxiety, perhaps, even so, a new hope, as formerly he had often and gladly heard the Baptist, so now he would fain have seen Jesus (Luke 9:9). He would see him, but not now. In that dark night of betrayal, he who at the bidding of the child of an adulteress, had murdered the Forerunner, might with approbation of a Pilate, have rescued him whose faithful witness John had been. But night was to merge into yet darker night. For it was the time and the power of the Evil One.

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t. HEROD’S OPINION OF JESUS

Mark 6:14-16

Luke 9:7-9

Matthew 14:1-2

8. Read Mark 6:14-16 entirely through one time.
(1) Luke 9:7-8
9. Read Mark 6:14

- (1) No reference
10. Read Mark 6:15
(1) Matthew 16:14
11. Mark 6:16
(1) No reference

Mark 6:14-16

- 14 King Herod heard about it, for his fame had become widespread, and people were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead; that is why mighty powers are at work in him."
- 15 Others were saying, "He is Elijah"; still others, "He is a prophet like any of the prophets."
- 16 But when Herod learned of it, he said, "It is John whom I beheaded. He has been raised up."

6:14-16 and the following section form a dramatic interlude, to fill up the interval of time while the disciples are on their mission; the present one shows the effect, not so much of the disciple's work, as of that of Jesus: "his name was spread abroad" (KJV; that is, he "had become known" (RSV), or "was now well known." "Some" people said--not "he", as in KJV, following the majority of later manuscripts--that Jesus was John the Baptist "risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works ... in him." The ancients believed that the soul of a person who had met a violent death became a powerful "control" in the spirit-world; hence Jesus was either John come back to life, or else was in league with his powerful spirit. (IB)

In Mark, the notice (about Herod's opinion of Jesus) is fuller than that found in Matthew 14:1-2; 6:14b-15 (about the opinions of others) is in anticipation of 8:28. The emphasis falls on this addition and sets the theme of the entire section down to 8:30: Who is Jesus? (JBC)

Verse 14:

King Herod -- Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. (JBC)

heard -- What is heard is not explained, possibly the disciples' miracles (6:12-13) or the fame of Jesus (6:14a)--or a combination of the two, implying that the disciples' activity resulted in renown for Jesus. (JBC)

people were saying -- Other variant manuscripts have it that "Herod said". However, many commentators prefer "people were saying" because Mark is not concerned here with Herod's opinion but with that of "the people," "others" (15a), and "still others (15b). (JBC)

John the Baptist has been raised from the dead -- This view could only have been shared by those who had never seen Jesus and John together while they were living. This identification attests that Jesus was also thought to be the eschatological prophet. (JBC)

powers are at work in him -- The identification of Jesus with John "raised from the dead", made on the basis of their similar behavior, presupposes that John too had performed miracles. The plural "powers" (*dynameis*) has a pagan ring that may refer to

the thought of inhabitants of Herod's tetrarchy. (JBC)

Verse 15:

Elijah -- See 1:2; 9:11-13. (JBC)

"Elijah" was expected to return during or before the messianic era (Malachi 4:5). The belief took various forms, and was found even among the Samaritans. "A prophet, like one of the prophets." A better reading is: "that he is one of the prophets" as is found in other manuscripts. These various popular estimates show that Jesus' ministry of healing and exorcism (verse 14) and of preaching (verse 15) led men to think of him as someone quite extraordinary; to Mark, who regards the section as an introduction to what follows, especially 8:27-30, these were of course inadequate explanations but characteristic of the Jewish population. (IB)

He is a prophet like any of the prophets -- Some versions read: "a prophet like one of the [ancient] prophets". This reading is found in most manuscripts, but according to manuscript D, "he is one of the prophets [returned to life]." In either reading Jesus' presence is seen as a sign of the *eschaton*, but significantly, no one recognizes him as the Messiah. (JBC)

Verse 16:

John whom I beheaded ...has been raised up -- Mark returns to Herod as an introduction to the next passage; the full irony of this opinion becomes apparent in 6:29. (JBC)

"Herod" prefers the first explanation: Jesus is John risen again; that is, come back to life, and therefore, as a revenant from the other world, able to perform mighty works. In fact, the "powers" operate "in (that is, through) him" (verse 14b), as self-effective forces using him as their agent. Without saying it, Mark surely viewed this as we do, as the terrified superstition of a murderer. (IB)

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12. Read Luke 9:7-9 entirely through one time.

(1) Matthew 14:1-12

(2) Mark 6:14-29

13. Read Luke 9:7-8

(1) Matthew 16:14

(3) Luke 9:19

(2) Mark 8:28

14. Read Luke 9:9

(1) Luke 23:8

Luke 9:7-9

- 7 Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was happening, and he was greatly perplexed because some were saying, "John has been raised from the dead";
- 8 others were saying, "Elijah has appeared"; still others, "One of the ancient prophets has arisen."
- 9 But Herod said, "John I beheaded. Who then is this about whom I hear such things?" And he kept trying to see him.

This passage bridges a literary gap between the departure and the return of the twelve. The various popular estimates of Jesus' person agree with those reported by the disciples in a later story (9:19; Mark 8:27-28), and Mark may have taken them from that narrative to expand a reference in his source material to Herod's uneasy reflections. (IB)

Verse 7:

the tetrarch -- More exact than Mark's "the king". (JBC)

perplexed -- Luke's reflection modifies the self-confidence of Antipas in Mark, for throughout Luke's account Antipas is incredulous: Not Antipas but "some people" claim that the Baptist has risen from the dead. (JBC)

Verse 8:

Elijah has appeared -- Thus Luke changes Mark's clear statement that "it is Elijah" for he sharply distinguishes Jesus from the Baptist and the "prophets of old." In Mark, Jesus is "like one of the prophets." (JBC)

Verses 7-8:

"Herod the tetrarch" is a correction of Mark's "king Herod"--also made by Matthew. "All that was done" has a wider reference than to the missionary activity of the twelve. "John" the Baptist had stirred interest and excited the imagination of large numbers of people, and Jesus doubtless seemed to many to be continuing his work. The idea that "Elijah" was to reappear "in the last days" occurs in Malachi 4:5; Ecclesiasticus 48:10, and frequently in rabbinical literature. "That one of the old prophets had risen" is Luke's interpretation of Mark's "a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." None of the surmises identifies Jesus with the Messiah. (IB)

Verse 9:

Antipas even boasts that it was "I myself [who] beheaded John," and so there is no point in speaking of John's return. So, too for Luke, interest does not center in any return to the old, but in the entirely new phenomenon in Jesus. (JBC)

to see him -- Luke is preparing for the future (23:8) (JBC)

Luke omits the long parenthesis in Mark that tells of Herod's execution of John and leaves his readers to make the easy inference. Only Luke says that "Herod" was perplexed. According to Mark, the tetrarch thought that Jesus was the Baptist redivivus. "And he sought to see him" is a statement in accord with 23:8 but in apparent contradiction to 13:31. (IB)

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15. Read Matthew 14:1-2 entirely through one time.

(1) Luke 9:7-9

16. Read Matthew 14:1

(1) Luke 3:1

17. Read Matthew 14:2

(1) No reference

Matthew 14:1-2

- 1 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the reputation of Jesus
2 and said to his servants, "This man is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead; that is why mighty powers are at work in him."

This Herod is Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great and Malthace. After the death of Herod the Great in 4 B.C. Antipas received Galilee and Perea as his portion of Herod's kingdom according to Herod's will, ratified by Augustus. Matthew reports only one of the various bits of gossip current about Jesus (Mark 6:15). (JBC)

Verse 1:

"Herod" Antipas was "tetrarch" or prince of Galilee and Perea (Trans-Jordan) from 4 B.C. to 39 A.D. He was son of Herod the Great (2:1) by his Samaritan wife Malthace, and thus a full brother of Archelaus (2:22). (IB)

Verse 2:

This is John the Baptist -- On the assumption that the words attributed to Herod bear some resemblance to what he had said, it seems unlikely that they express a superstitious fear. John had worked no wonders, but one risen from the dead would be full of power. The burden of the remark is, "Here is another John the Baptist" -- who may expect the same treatment as the first. Herod no doubt shared the common superstitious belief in miraculous power; but this would not prevent him from executing the wonder-worker if Jesus threatened to be another moral prophet as explicit as John had been. (JBC)

Perhaps Herod thought of John as literally "risen from the dead;" but more probably he meant that one in whom "these powers are at work" is "John all over again." (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

We suppose that, during the nine or ten months of Christ's Galilean ministry, the tetrarch had resided in his Perea dominions (east of the Jordan) at Machaerus (where John was beheaded) or at Julius. We infer that the labors of the apostles had also extended this far since they attracted the notice of Herod. In the popular excitement caused by the execution of the Baptist, the miraculous activity of the messengers of Christ, whom John had announced, would naturally attract wider interest, while Antipas would give greater heed to them since he was under the influence of fear and superstition. We can scarcely be mistaken in supposing that this accounts for the abrupt termination of the labors of the apostles and their return to Jesus. At any rate, the arrival of the disciples of John, with tidings of their master's death, and the return of the apostles, seem to have been contemporaneous. Finally, we conjecture, that it was among the motives which influenced the removal of Christ and his apostles from Capernaum. Temporarily to withdraw himself from Herod, to give them a season of rest, and further preparation after the excitement of the last few weeks, and to avoid being involved in the popular movements consequent on the murder of the Baptist--these incidents we venture to indicate as among the reasons of the departure of Jesus and his disciples, first into the dominions of the tetrarch Philip, on the eastern side of the Lake, and after that "into the borders of Tyre and Sidon. Thus the fate of the Baptist was, as might have been expected, decisive in its influence on the history of Christ and of his Kingdom.

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u. THE RETURN OF THE TWELVE

Mark 6:30-33

Luke 9:10-11

18. Read Mark 6:30-33 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference
19. Read Mark 6:30
(1) Luke 9:10
20. Read Mark 6:31
(1) No reference
21. Read Mark 6:32
(1) Matthew 14:13 (3) Luke 9:10
(2) Mark 3:20
22. Read Mark 6:33
(1) No reference
- 30 The apostles gathered together with Jesus and reported all they had done and taught.
- 31 He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." People were coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity even to eat.
- 32 So they went off in the boat by themselves to a deserted place.
- 33 People saw them leaving and many came to know about it. They hastened there on foot from all the towns and arrived at the place before them.

The story found in 6:30-44 is told in all the Gospels and has been variously interpreted. The language used, both here and in the parallel story (8:1-9), is quite liturgical; and yet for Mark it is one of Jesus' "mighty works," by which he fed a great multitude of people who were physically hungry. Albert Schweitzer viewed the incident as an "eschatological sacrament," observed in anticipation of the great feast to be held in the approaching kingdom of God. It is difficult if not impossible to make out its original significance. Probably different emphases were given the story as it was handed down by tradition prior to Mark. For one thing, it has certainly been influenced by the OT legends of miraculous provision of food (for example, I Kings 17:8-16, and especially II Kings 4:42-44, which is closely parallel), although it is going beyond the evidence to say that it was constructed in imitation of OT stories. (IB)

Verse 30:

[reported all they had done and taught](#) -- The whole of this verse is absent from

Matthew, where 14:12-13 has a more natural sequence of events. Jesus' retreat to the desert is clearly motivated by Herod's murder of John; in addition, the notice that the disciples had "taught" is at variance with the synoptic tradition regarding the nature of their mission, which is to proclaim repentance (Mark 6:12-13) and the coming of God's kingdom (Matthew 10:7; Luke 9:2; 10:9). (JBC)

Verse 31:

Come away by yourselves -- Only Mark emphasizes that Jesus was alone with the twelve, a detail that presages a revelation of Jesus to them (see 1:29). (JBC)

rest a while -- Matthew 14:13 suggests that Jesus' withdrawal to the desert was prompted by Herod's murder of John; Mark assigns "rest" after the mission as the motive of Jesus' retreat. The theme of "rest" occurs in the OT to designate the entrance of the Israelites into the promised land after the 40 years in the desert (Deuteronomy 3:20; 12:10; 25:19; Joshua 1:13, 15). It is often connected with the image of God as the shepherd who gives rest to his flock (Isaiah 65:10; Ezekiel 34:15 [both LXX]; Psalm 23:2). Thus verse 31 introduces the theme of Jesus as the eschatological shepherd. (JBC)

Verses 30-34:

These verses are clearly editorial, and provide both the continuity with what precedes (verse 13) and the setting for what follows. Notice that "a desert place" (KJV) is merely "a lonely place" (RSV). "Compassion": The motive is the same as in 8:2, although there it is the hunger of the people that is stressed. The language is borrowed from the OT (eg., Ezekiel 34:6). Presumably the story in its prior form before Mark's writing began with this verse (34), thought the final words, "and he began to teach them many things", have been added by Mark. It is characteristic of Mark to notice this fact, without giving any of the content of the teaching. (IB)

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23. Read Luke 9:10-11 entirely through one time.
(1) No references

Luke 9:10-11

- 10 When the apostles returned, they explained to him what they had done. He took them and withdrew in private to a town called Bethsaida.
11 The crowds, meanwhile, learned of this and followed him. He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and he healed those who needed to be cured.

Verse 10:

the apostles -- The twelve are now given this other name (see 6:13). (JBC)

He took them and withdrew in private to a town called Bethsaida -- There are several textual variants for the last words in different manuscripts: "city," "town," "desert place of a city," or simply "desert place." Bethsaida, originally a village, was embellished by Philip the tetrarch (cf. 3:1) and raised to the status of a city, called Julius, in honor of a daughter of Caesar Augustus. Philip, Andrew, and Peter came originally from Bedside (John 1:44). It was not really in Galilee and Luke is silent about its

location. (JBC)

Verse 11:

He received them -- Or as in other versions "he welcomed them" which is a phrase proper to Luke. (JBC)

"Bethsaida" was a "city" on the north end of the lake, to the east of the Jordan. It had been rebuilt by Philip as the capital of his tetrarchy. By telescoping Mark's account Luke take Jesus and his disciples out of Galilee before, instead of after, the feeding of the multitude. Such editorial redaction facilitates the omission of Mark 6:45 - 8:26 between 9:17 and 18, but involves "the crowds" that "followed" Jesus in a journey of ten miles or more, and overlooks the fact that the succeeding narrative was originally localized "in a lonely place" (verse 12). (IB)

Summary from LToJC:

In the circumstances previously described, Jesus resolved at once to leave Capernaum; and this was probably for the sake of his disciples, who needed rest; for the people who might have attempted an uprising after the murder of John the Baptist; and temporarily to withdraw himself and his followers from the power of Herod. For this purpose he chose the place outside the dominions of Antipas, nearest to Capernaum. This was Bethsaida ("the house of fishing," or "fishing town" as we might call it), on the eastern border of Galilee, just within the territory of Philip the tetrarch. Originally a small village, Philip had converted it into a town, and named it Julius, after Caesar's daughter. It lay on the eastern bank of Jordan, just before the Jordan enters the Lake of Galilee. It must not be confused with the other "fisher-town", or Bethsaida, on the western shore of the Lake, which the Gospel of John distinguishes from the eastern as Bethsaida of Galilee (evidencing by this local knowledge its Judean, or rather Galilean, authorship).

Other minute points of deep interest in the same direction will present themselves in the course of this narrative. Meantime we notice that this is the only history, previous to Christ's last visit to Jerusalem, which is recorded by all four evangelists. It is also the only series of events in the whole course of that Galilean ministry, which commenced after the return from that "unknown feast" which is referred to in John's Gospel. One scholar notes that the account of John could neither have been derived from those of the Synoptics, nor from any common original. It contains two distinct notices, as to time, which enables us to fit it exactly into the framework of this history. For. The statement in John's Gospel (6:4) that the Passover was near, is confirmed by the independent notice of Mark (6:39), that those whom the Lord miraculously led were ranged "on the green grass." In that climate there would have been no "green grass" soon after the Passover. We must look upon the coincidence of these two notices as one of the un-designed confirmations of this narrative.

For, miraculous, as it certainly is, and the attempts rationalistically to explain it, to sublime it into a parable, to give it the spiritualistic meaning of spiritual feeding, or to account for its mythical origin by the precedent of the descent of the manna, or of the miracle of Elisha, are even more palpable failures than those made to account for the miracle at Cana. Even those who hold such views assert them in this instance hesitatingly. It seems almost impossible to conceive that a narrative recorded in all four Gospels should not have an historical basis, and the appeal to the precedent of Elisha is

the more inept, that in common Jewish thinking he was not regarded as especially a type of the Messiah. The only alternative is to accept--or entirely to reject it. In view of the exceptional record of this history in all four Gospels, no unbiased historical student would treat it as a simple invention, for which there was no ground in reality. Nor can its origin be accounted for by previous Jewish expectancy, or OT precedent. The only rational mode of explaining it is on the supposition of its truth. This miracle, and what follows, mark the climax in our Lord's doing, as does the healing of the Syro-Phoenician maiden marks the utmost sweep of his activity, and the Transfiguration marks the highest point in regard to the miraculous about His Person. The only reason which can be assigned for the miracle of his feeding the five thousand was that of all His working: Man's need, and in view it, the stirring of the pity and power that were in Him. But even so, we cannot fail to mark the contrast between King Herod, and the banquet that ended with the murder of the Baptist, and King Jesus, and the banquet that ended with His lonely prayer on the mountain-side, the calming of the storm on the Lake, and the deliverance from death of his disciples.

Only a few hours' sail from Capernaum, and even a shorter distance by land (around the head of the Lake) lay the district of Bethsaida-Julius. It was natural that Christ, wishing to avoid public attention, should have gone "by ship", and equally so that the many "seeing them departing, and knowing"--meaning what direction the boat was taking, should have followed on foot, and been joined by others from the neighboring villages, as those from Capernaum passed through them, they also perhaps recognized on the Lake the now well-known sail, speeding towards the other shore. "The neighboring villages" seems the fair meaning of Mark 6:31-33 which can be compared to Matthew 14:13. "The well-known sail" is in Mark 6:32 "by the ship" with the definite article (the). Probably it was the same boat that was always at Jesus' disposal, perhaps belonging to the sons of Zebedee. It is an incidental but interesting confirmation of the narrative, that he same notice about this journey occurs, evidently not by design, in John 6:22. Yet another we find in the fact that some of those who "ran there on foot" had reached the place before Jesus and his apostles (Mark 6:33). Only some, as we judge. The largest proportion arrived later, and soon swelled to the immense number of "about 5,000 men," "besides women and children." The circumstance that the Passover was near at hand, so that many must have been starting on their journey to Jerusalem, around the Lake and through Perea, partly accounts for the concourse of such multitudes. And this, perhaps in conjunction with the effect on the people of John's murder, may also explain their ready and eager gathering to Christ, thus affording yet another confirmation of the narrative.

It is a well-known spot where Jesus and His apostles touched the shore. Not many miles south of it was the Gerasa, where the great miracle of healing the demonized had been worked (Mark 5:1-16). Just beyond Gerasa the mountains and hills recede, and the plain along the shore enlarges, until it attains wide proportions on the northern bank of the Lake. The few ruins which mark the site of Bethsaida-Julius--most of the basalt-stones having been removed for building purposes--lie on the edge of a hill, three or four miles north of the Lake. The ford, by which those who came from Capernaum crossed the Jordan, was no doubt the one which is still in use about two miles from where the river enters the Lake. About a mile further, on that wide expanse of grass would be the scene of that great miracle. In short, the locality thoroughly accords with the

requirements of the Gospel narrative.

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v. FEEDING OF THE 5,000

Mark 6:34-44

Luke 9:12-17

John 6:1-15

24. Read Mark 6:34-44 entirely through one time.

(1) No reference

Mark 6:34-44

- 34 When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.
- 35 By now it was already late and his disciples approached him and said, "This is a deserted place and it is already very late.
- 36 Dismiss them so that they can go to the surrounding farms and villages and buy themselves something to eat."
- 37 He said to them in reply, "Give them some food yourselves." But they said to him, "Are we to buy two hundred days' wages worth of food and give it to them to eat?"
- 38 He asked them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." And when they had found out they said, "Five loaves and two fish."
- 39 So he gave orders to have them sit down in groups on the green grass.
- 40 The people took their places in rows by hundreds and by fifties.
- 41 Then, taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to (his) disciples to set before the people; he also divided the two fish among them all.
- 42 They all ate and were satisfied.
- 43 And they picked up twelve wicker baskets full of fragments and what was left of the fish.
- 44 Those who ate (of the loaves) were five thousand men.

Verse 34:

[like sheep without a shepherd](#) -- The motive of Jesus' pity recalls the allegory of the shepherd in Exodus 34:5. (JBC)

[he began to teach them](#) -- Jesus' pity moves him to assuage the spiritual hunger of the shepherd-less people by bringing God's revelation to them. (JBC)

Verse 35:

[a deserted place](#) -- Or, "a lonely place." Literally, "a desert place." The stress the desert (6:31, 33, 35), on eating (6:11, 36, 37, 42-44), and on bread (6:37, 38, 41, 44) recalls the miracle of manna (Exodus 16:12-35). (JBC)

Verse 39:

he gave orders -- Or, "he ordered them all". The universal significance of this miracle is underscored by the repeated use of "all" (6:33, 39, 41, 42). (JBC)

sit down -- Literally, "recline" as at a table. (JBC)

in groups -- Or "in parties." Literally, "banquet by banquet, eating-party by eating-party. (JBC)

on the green grass -- The vivid detail, often taken to be an eyewitness recollection that would date the event to early spring around Passover (John 6:4), may be only an allusion to Psalm 23:2, thus continuing the shepherd and banquet imagery. (JBC)

Verses 37-40:

"Give them some food", or "give them to eat yourselves" (Cf. II Kings 4:42-43). It was inevitable that such a story as this, in the earliest Christian circles, should be told in OT language. "Two hundred denarii" is about \$40.00, with purchasing power in the first century of about four times as much, or \$160.00. The sum was an impossible one for the disciples. The five "loaves" would be small round loaves, made of barley meal (as in II Kings 4:42; cf. John 6:9), slightly larger than our baker's buns. The "two fish" would undoubtedly be cooked. It was probably not what was left over from the apostles' recent tour (in verse 8 they were to take no bread), but the modest provision for their retreat (verse 31), which they were now ordered to distribute among the people. "By hundreds, and by fifties": Originally, perhaps, fifty companies of one hundred each, or a hundred of fifty each, totally five thousand (verse 44). (IB)

Verse 40:

by hundreds and by fifties -- This is possibly an allusion to Moses' apportioning the Israelites into groups of 1,000, 100, 50, and 10 (Exodus 18:25; Deuteronomy 1:15). According to the Dead Sea Scrolls, the same apportionment was to obtain at the Messianic banquet. (JBC)

Verse 41:

taking the five loaves -- The original account of Jesus' gestures may have been expanded by details from the institution of the Eucharist (14:22). (JBC)

Verse 42:

They all ate and were satisfied -- Or, "they all ate and were full." An OT formula recalling the manna (Psalm 78:29; 105:40) and the messianic abundance to come (Isaiah 49:10; cf. 65:10-11; Psalm 132:15). (JBC)

Verses 41-42:

"He looked up to heaven" was the normal attitude of prayer, and especially of the thanksgiving which began a Jewish meal. This feature survived in the later liturgies of the church. "And blessed"; that is, pronounced the words of blessing and thanksgiving which were said by the head of the family at a meal: "Blessed art thou, O Lord, who gives food to the hungry," or something similar. It was God who was "blessed"--that is, was pronounced blessed--not the food. In 8:7 the word means "having given thanks" or "having said the thanksgiving." As in verses 38 and 43 the reference to the fish seems to be added as of secondary significance (as also in 8:7); in verse 44 the fish are simply omitted. Liturgical emphasis perhaps tended to minimize this feature. "All...were filled" attests the reality of the miracle. (IB)

Verse 43:

twelve ... baskets -- the leftovers, a sign of God's superabundant gifts (Exodus

16:19-24; II Kings 4:43-44) are enough to feed the 12 tribes of the new Israel. The customary expressions of wonder are missing at the end of this miracle, corroborating the impression that Mark has presented it less as a miracle than as a Messianic sign intended to disclose to the twelve the secret of Jesus' person (8:19). (JBC)

Unlike the manna (Exodus 16:18), except that which was kept over for the Sabbath (Exodus 16:22-23), there was not only a quantity left, as in the OT story (II Kings 4:43-44), but a vastly larger quantity than was available before the multitude had been fed. The twelve baskets of "fragments" presumably symbolize the twelve tribes of Israel, or perhaps the twelve apostles. As with the wine at Cana (John 2:6), superabundance is characteristic of divine bounty. It is evident that, at least as Mark understands it, this is no pleasant tale of a picnic in the hills, where the amply provided shared with those who had nothing--as in some modern expositions of the passage. (IB)

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25. Read Luke 9:12-17 entirely through one time.
(1) No reference
26. Read Luke 9:12
(1) No reference
27. Read Luke 9:13-17
(1) II Kings 4:42-44
28. Read Luke 9:13-15
(1) No reference
29. Read Luke 9:16
(1) Luke 22:19 (4) Acts 20:11
(2) Luke 24:30-31 (5) Acts 27:35
(3) Acts 2:42
30. Read Luke 9:17
(1) No reference

Luke 9:12-17

- 12 As the day was drawing to a close, the Twelve approached him and said, "Dismiss the crowd so that they can go to the surrounding villages and farms and find lodging and provisions; for we are in a deserted place here."
- 13 He said to them, "Give them some food yourselves." They replied, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have, unless we ourselves go and buy food for all these people."
- 14 Now the men there numbered about five thousand. Then he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of (about) fifty."
- 15 They did so and made them all sit down.

- 16 Then taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing over them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd.
- 17 They all ate and were satisfied. And when the leftover fragments were picked up, they filled twelve wicker baskets.

This is the only miracle story in the tradition that is recorded in all four Gospels (Mark 6:30-44; Matthew 14:13-21; cf. John 6:1-13; Matthew 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-10). Mark (8:1-9) and Matthew (15:32-38) also relate another variant. John (chapter 6) understood the incident to symbolize the Eucharist, and therefore omitted any reference to the institution of the Eucharist in his account of the Last Supper (John 13). Christ himself was “the bread of life” that was given “for the life of the world” (John 6:48-51). (IB)

Frequent and ingenuous attempts have been made to discover a “historical core” to the narrative. Jesus and his disciples, it is said, distributed their own small store of provisions, and their example stimulated a contagious generosity among others. But such rationalizations do not carry conviction. In all likelihood the story of the multiplication of the loaves and the fish is a miracle story that came in the course of narration to be regarded as a prototype of the Eucharist. Bread and fish on frescoes in the catacombs are symbols of the Lord’s Supper. A similar story about a miraculous feeding of a hundred men had been told of Elisha (II Kings 4:42-44). (IB)

This episode is the only miracle story common to all four Gospels; it constitutes a climax of Jesus’ Galilean ministry, for after this he concentrates upon the training of his apostles, with his thoughts centering upon his destiny. Eucharistic symbolism is certainly evident in this account, and the manner in which all four evangelists link the multiplication of the loaves with the announcement of the passion underlines the “sacrificial” feature of the Eucharist. (JBC)

Verse 12:

[was drawing to a close](#) -- Or, “began to wear on.” Luke associates the need for food with the late hour of the day. Mark’s Gospel must have been further enriched after Luke had drawn from it, for Luke certainly would have included Mark’s reason for the miracle: “he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.” (JBC)

Verses 12-15:

Barley “loaves” and smoked or pickled “fish” were the food of the poor in Palestine. Mark puts this numerical estimate of the crowd at the end of his narrative. “By fifties” instead of Mark’s “by hundreds and by fifties.” (JBC)

Verse 13:

Luke softens the apostles’ impatient reply to Jesus (Mark 6:37). (JBC)

Verse 16:

[taking ...](#) -- In each of the multiplication scenes (Mark and Matthew record two such events), in the words of the institution of the Eucharist, and at the Emmaus supper (24:30 the same words, in the same sequence, occur: “took ... looked up ... blessed ... broke ... gave.” Luke further intensifies the Eucharistic resemblance, for he suppresses Mark’s double reference to the fish, thus giving more attention to the bread. (JBC)

The actions that are ascribed to Jesus were those employed by the celebrant of the

Lord's Supper in the ritual of the early church. The presiding elder or bishop "blessed" the bread, "broke" it into fragments, and "gave" them to deacons to be distributed to the faithful. The priest in the western church still looks "up to heaven" when he consecrates the elements. But rabbinical notices show that a Jewish host observed much the same ritual at any common meal (cf. also 24:30; Acts 27:35). (IB)

Verse 17:

twelve ... baskets -- Did the 12 apostles collect the fragments, or are we to see a more symbolic significance in the number 12? (JBC)

fragments -- The Greek word is used in the Didache (9:3-4) as the technical term for the broken particles of the Eucharist. (JBC)

The careful collection of larger fragments was accepted procedure after a Jewish meal, but the mention of "baskets of broken pieces" also served to emphasize the miraculous -- the disciples had far more "left over" than they had when they started. Twelve" in this version of the story ("seven" in Mark 8:8) corresponds to the number of disciples. (IB)

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31. Read Matthew 14:13-21 entirely through one time.

(1) Matthew 15:32-38

(3) Luke 9:10-17

(2) Mark 6:32-44

(4) John 6:1-13

Matthew 14:13-21

- 13 When Jesus heard of it, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself. The crowds heard of this and followed him on foot from their towns.
- 14 When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick.
- 15 When it was evening, the disciples approached him and said, "This is a deserted place and it is already late; dismiss the crowds so that they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves."
- 16 (Jesus) said to them, "There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves."
- 17 But they said to him, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have here."
- 18 Then he said, "Bring them here to me,"
- 19 and he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds.
- 20 They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left over -- twelve wicker baskets full.
- 21 Those who ate were about five thousand men, not counting women and children.

Matthew connects this incident with the killing of John the Baptist and the withdrawal of Jesus from Galilee. Mark associates it with the return of the twelve from their mission and a withdrawal into solitude for rest. The scene is not clear in any of the three Synoptists. (JBC)

There are three versions of this story: (1) the one found here and in Mark 6:35-44 and Luke 9:12-17; (2) 15:32-39 = Mark 8:1-10; and (3) John 6:1-14. All appear to be variant forms of the same tradition. John's story draws on both the feedings of the five thousand and the four thousand and has a few touches that suggest Matthew as well as Mark. His "barley loaves" (John 6:9) is reminiscent of Elisha's miracle in II Kings 4:42-44, which, together with I Kings 17:9-16, may be a model for the stories in the Gospels. Christians believed that what Elijah and Elisha did, Jesus could also do, and stories of miraculous plenty are current in Syria to this day. The Acts of John, a second-century book by a writer who believed that Jesus was only apparently human, attempts to explain that the Lord could feed miraculously by giving each of them a very small morsel. The Talmud contains a Jewish miracle story of a similar nature. (IB)

The Synoptic Gospels frequently speak of eating and drinking in connection with the satisfaction of spiritual need, and more than once they portray the kingdom of God in terms of a banquet (e.g., 22:1-14; Luke 14:16-24). The story of the miraculous feeding suggests the messianic banquet in more ways than one. Without attempting to pronounce on the question of miracle, one may remark that the story seems to point to an occasion when Jesus and a large gathering of his followers in Galilee broke bread together. The Lord's Supper of Christians is probably derived not merely from the last meal with the twelve, but also from many common meals which had a strikingly religious character and were thought of as foretastes of the great banquet in the kingdom of God. (IB)

Verse 13:

a deserted place -- It is not identified, nor can it be said with certainty that it was on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. However, it lay near enough to villages to make possible the purchase of food; consequently the locale is not "the desert" in the technical sense of the of the term. (JBC)

from their towns -- The names of the cities from which the crowds followed Jesus are not given, but one has to assume that the cities on the shore of the Sea of Galilee are meant. (JBC)

Verse 14:

he cured their sick -- Contrast Mark (6:30) which speaks of teaching. (JBC)

Verse 15:

It is unlikely that very many of the crowd would leave home for a day's journey without carrying some food; the modern Palestinian peasant would not be so improvident. (JBC)

Verse 17:

five loaves and two fishes only -- Some versions qualify this better by reading "only five loaves and two fishes". The amount mentioned would not even suffice for Jesus and the twelve. (JBC)

The "five loaves" may have been baked from wheat flour, but barley bread was the more common food of poor people, and is mentioned in John 6:9. Smoked or pickled "fish" were a delicacy often eaten as a relish for the bread. The rabbis said that in the messianic age the great sea monster Leviathan would be salted and given to the people as food (as in Psalm 74:14). Early Christian art often uses bread and fish as symbols of the Eucharist, as, for example, in the magnificent mosaics of et-Tabgha on the Sea of Galilee. (IB)

Verse 19:

The ceremonial with which Jesus blesses and distributes the food anticipates the Last Supper (26:26). (JBC)

Verses 19-20:

Mark says that the “grass” was green, and this suggests the spring of the year. Jesus “looked up to heaven”--this is a suitable gesture still prescribed in the Roman Mass at the beginning of the prayer of consecration--and “blessed”; that is, spoke a prayer of praise and thanksgiving, as at the Last Supper (26:26). The usual prayer at the beginning of a Jewish meal is: “Blessed art thou O Lord our God, king of the world, who hast brought forth bread from the earth.” The prayers at the end of the meal were longer. It was customary for the father of the family or the host to break the bread. The “disciples”, like the deacons in the early Christian Eucharist, gave the bread to the “crowds” and collected the “broken pieces” afterward. This was also the custom at banquets given by religious Jews. The word translated “baskets” is used by Juvenal to refer to the little food baskets which Jews carried so that they might eat only food prepared according to the food laws. The number “twelve” suggests that each of the special disciples had such a basket. (IB)

Verse 20:

The twelve hand out the food and collect the fragments, one basket for each. Matthew heightens the number of the people; uncounted women and children besides 5000 men, who were mentioned in Mark 6:44. The number is very probably exaggerated, and it is not the result of a head count in any case; oral tradition tends to raise such figures. (JBC)

The usual note of wonder that follows miracles is not mentioned here. The incident is related less for the element of the miraculous than as a symbol and an anticipation of the Eucharist and of the Messianic banquet (see 8:11-12). The association with the Eucharist is more explicit in John 6, where the multiplication of the loaves is followed by John’s Eucharistic discourse. It is a Messianic sign and symbol that will find its fulfillment in the true Messianic banquet, the Eucharist. (JBC)

Matthew has abbreviated here less sharply than elsewhere; but his abbreviations, achieved by the omission of some details and dialogue, have the effect of heightening the symbolic significance of the incident. The exception to this is the omission of Mark 6:39-40. (JBC)

Verse 21:

Matthew adds “besides women and children,” thus increasing the total number. (IB)

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31. Read John 6:1-15 entirely through one time.

(1) No reference

32. Read John 6:1-13

(1) Matthew 14:13-21

(2) Mark 6:32-44

(3) Luke 9:10-17

33. Read John 6:1-3
(1) No reference
34. Read John 6:4
(1) John 2:13 (2) John 11:55
35. Read John 6:5
(1) Numbers 11:13
36. Read John 6:6
(1) No reference
37. Read John 6:7
(1) Matthew 20:2
38. Read John 6:8
(1) No reference
39. Read John 6:9
(1) II Kings 4:42-44
40. Read John 6:10
(1) Matthew 14:21 (2) Mark 6:44
41. Read John 6:11
(1) John 21:13
42. Read John 6:12-13
(1) No reference
43. Read John 6:14
(1) Deuteronomy 18:15, 18 (3) Acts 3:22
(2) Malachi 3:1, 23
44. Read John 6:15
(1) John 18:36

John 6:1-15

- 1 After this, Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee (of Tiberias).
2 A large crowd followed him, because they saw the signs he was performing on the sick.
3 Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples.
4 The Jewish feast of Passover was near.
5 When Jesus raised his eyes and saw that a large crowd was coming to him, he said to Philip, "Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?"

- 6 He said this to test him, because he himself knew what he was going to do.
7 Philip answered him, "Two hundred days' wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little (bit)."
8 One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to him,
9 "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?"
10 Jesus said, "Have the people recline." Now there was a great deal of grass in that place. So the men reclined, about five thousand in number.
11 Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining, and also as much of the fish as they wanted.
12 When they had had their fill, he said to his disciples, "Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted."
13 So they collected them, and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves that had been more than they could eat.
14 When the people saw the sign he had done, they said, "This is truly the Prophet, the one who is to come into the world."
15 Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry him off to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain alone.

John 6:1-71 concerns the topic "the bread of life." With the exception of the Passion Narrative, this is the longest continued section in which John parallels the Synoptic narrative, and the close correspondence of John with the two narratives of Mark in particular (6:30-54; 8:21-33) constitutes one of the strongest arguments in favor of the view that John knew and made use of Mark. As usual, however, John has gone in his own way, and it is especially, in his use of Synoptic material that we must pay attention to his particular purpose. (JBC)

John 6:1-15 consists of the fourth sign in John's Gospel. John's first purpose is to exploit the symbolic potential of the story of the multiplication of the loaves. Actually, he only brings out explicitly what is already implicit in the synoptic account. For the Synoptic tradition, the miracle of the loaves (or the two miracles in Mark and Matthew) is already a Eucharistic symbol, which has been evidenced by the liturgical and sacramental allusions incorporated into the form of the account. (JBC)

This story, with a few significant variations, follows the tradition of the feeding of the five thousand recorded in Mark 6:31-44 (=Matthew 13:21; Luke 9:10-17), of which the story of the four thousand in Mark 8:1-9 (=Matthew 15:32-39) is probably a doublet. Since the story of the walking on the sea follows immediately, as in Mark and Matthew, John has either made use of Mark, or they are both indebted to an early source. The position of this narrative in John's Gospel points either to a displacement of sections or to a remarkable indifference on the evangelist's part to historical sequence. Chapter 5 left Jesus in Jerusalem. Chapter 6 begins, "After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee." Chapter 7 opens with a statement that "Jesus went about in Galilee", rather than Judea because the Jews were trying to kill him" (cf. 5:18). The scene opens in chapter 6 just before the feast of Passover. Chapter 5 opens with a visit to Jerusalem for an unnamed feast. Chapter 7 describes a controversy in Jerusalem during the feast of Tabernacles. It seems probable that chapter 6 relates events that took place before those

narrated in chapter 5. (IB)

The significant variants from the Mark's story are (1) Jesus' initiative (verses 5-6); (2) the disciples' embarrassment (verses 7, 9); (3) the naming of two disciples, with Greek names (verses 5, 8; cf. 1:44, 48; 12:21-22; 14:8-9); (4) the stress upon the magnitude of the miraculous supply (verses 7, 11). Even more striking in the sequel. According to John's narrative, the people on seeing the sign said, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world" (verse 14; cf. 1:21, 25; 7:40). But they misunderstood the nature of the sign. It was indeed, as Jesus was to show on the following Sabbath in the synagogue at Capernaum, a symbol of the heavenly food which life to the world, and is brought by the true Messiah in the eschatological age. Quite wrongly they thought of a political deliverer whose kingdom was of this world (18:36). Josephus gives two instances of charlatans who deluded the population by claiming to perform signs to prove their leadership in delivering them from Roman domination. One is the story of Theudas (*Antiquities*. 20. 5. 1), who persuaded a multitude to follow him to the river Jordan, saying that he was a prophet, and would by his own command divide the river and give them an easy passage over it. The procurator Fadus shattered this mad attempt. The other story is told twice (*Antiquities*. 20. 8. 6; *Jewish War*. 2. 13. 5) about an Egyptian who gave himself out to be a prophet. He assembled a crowd on the Mount of Olives, declaring that at his word the walls of Jerusalem would collapse, upon which he would lead them to the capture of the city. This rising was also crushed. The flames of fanatical nationalism were easily fanned into a blaze, and it was evident to Jesus that the population of Galilee wished to hail him as the head of a messianic uprising. Therefore, "Jesus withdrew again to the hills by himself" (verse 15). (IB)

Verse 1:

Sea of Galilee -- This is the ordinary NT designation of the Galilean lake called in the OT the Sea of Chinnereth (Numbers 34:11). "Of Tiberius" has been added, either by John himself or someone else (cf. 21:1), for precision and updating. Tiberius, a city on the western shore, was founded by Herod Antipas, sometime after 20 A.D. and named for the Emperor Tiberius, and subsequently gave its name to the lake. "To the shore" of Tiberius in some manuscripts is probably a later addition designed to smooth out the text. (JBC)

Verse 2:

Again John notes in passing Jesus' miraculous works, in accord with the Synoptic tradition, which has not detailed in his gospel. The crowd has been attracted by these miracles; not necessarily a sign of implicit faith. (JBC)

Verse 3:

the mountain -- Only Matthew (in the second account of the multiplication of loaves--15:29) localizes the miracle on a mountainside as does John. The significance is doubtless the same as in the synoptic tradition: the mountain evokes the memory of Sinai, where Moses mediated the revelation that points to Christ (cf. Mark 3:13; Matthew 5:1). (JBC)

Verse 4:

The Jewish feast of Passover was near -- See comment on 2:13. This is the second Passover mentioned in John; the synoptic tradition merely notes that it was the spring of the year. John is already thinking of the Eucharist, the theme to be developed in

the coming discourse. (JBC)

Verses 5-6:

The Mosaic allusions (verse 3) continue in the question that Jesus puts to Philip to test his faith (cf. Numbers 11:13). (JBC)

Verse 7:

Philip's answer is very similar to Moses' observation in Numbers 11:22. Here again John is verbally quite close to Mark 6:37. (JBC)

Two hundred days' wages -- Literally, "two hundred denarii; a denarius appears to have been the ordinary working day's wage (cf. Matthew 20:2). (JBC)

Verses 8-9:

Andrew, who brought Peter to Jesus (1:41), shows a measure of resourcefulness in this detail reported only in John. Later he is consulted by Philip when the Gentiles want to "see" Jesus (12:20-22). Andrew's actions permit us a rare insight into a disciple's personality. (JBC)

barley loaves -- That the loaves were of barley (the ordinary food of the poor) is brought out only in John. (JBC)

Verse 10:

John's account summarizes the synoptic versions. (JBC)

Verses 11-12:

In John there are liturgical allusions lacking in the Synoptic versions and vice versa. The synoptic have the detail of the breaking of the bread (cf. Acts 2:42), a detail that John may have avoided because of 19:33. On the other hand, "he gave thanks" in John is more allusive to the Eucharist than the word used by the Synoptics. Mark 8:6 and Matthew 15:36 use John's word in their second account of the multiplication of loaves; so also I Corinthians 11:23. The synoptic tradition has the disciples rather than Jesus himself distribute the bread--in view of the size of the crowd, this seems plausible--but in John's bypassing of this detail we are reminded of the circumstances of the Last Supper. In John alone the gathering up of the fragments is given as a command of Christ; in the Didache (9:4) the same word is used for the gathering of the Eucharistic bread, in turn a symbol of the gathering of the church, whence comes the ancient word *synaxis* for the first part of the Mass. In the same passage of the Didache the word *klasma*, used of the morsels of bread in John and the synoptic, is applied to the broken portions of Eucharistic bread. Although in both John and the synoptic all the details have an authentic setting in the miraculous event, there seems to be no doubt that a sacramental allusion is intended, which was not missed by the early church. (JBC)

Verse 13:

twelve ... baskets -- Though John does not mention them, mention of this number of baskets, found also in the synoptic, would indicate the presence of all twelve of the disciples. In view of the Mosaic relevance of the miracle (verse 14f.), John doubtless sees an additional significance in the number twelve. The detail serves to emphasize the miraculous nature of the event. Its full character as a "sign" will appear in verse 25ff. (JBC)

Verses 14 and 15 are not in the synoptic tradition, but contain an important historical note that has been transmitted by John alone. (JBC)

Verse 14:

[This is ... the Prophet](#) -- The people correctly see in this miracle an indication that Jesus is the prophet like Moses come to found the new Israel. However, they do this merely because of the signs he had performed, without real depth to their perception, as the event will show. "Signs" rather than "sign" is doubtless to be preferred as the better reading in the manuscripts for John is thinking of similar instances of this illusory enthusiasm. (JBC)

Verse 15:

The results of the popular enthusiasm immediately become manifest: The people would have him as their earthly king, their Jewish Messiah (cf. 5:43). What is offered to Jesus here, and what he emphatically rejects, has a correspondence in the temptation scenes of Luke 4:1-13 and Matthew 4:1-11. (JBC)

[he withdrew again to the mountain alone](#) -- Some versions read: "he fled back to the mountain alone." It is not unlikely that at this time the disciples shared the messianic enthusiasm of the people; Matthew 14:22 and Mark 6:45, though they do not record this event, note that Jesus "forced" the disciples to cross the Lake of Galilee again immediately after the miracle of the loaves. (JBC)

Summary from LToJC:

As we picture it to ourselves, our Lord with His disciples, and perhaps followed by those who had outrun the first, first retired to the top of a height, and there rested in teaching conversation with them (John 6:3). Presently, as He saw the great multitudes gathering, He was "moved with compassion towards them" (Matthew 14:14). One scholar supposes that "a day of teaching and healing must be intercalated before the miracle of feeding", but there is no reason for this. All the events fit well into one day. There could be no question of retirement or rest in view of this. Surely it was the opportunity which God had given--a call which came to Him from His Father. Every such opportunity was unspeakably precious to Him, who long longed to gather the lost under His wings. It might be, that even now they would learn what belonged to their peace. Oh, that they would learn it! At least, He must work while it was called today, before the night of judgment came; work with that unending patience and intense compassion which made Him weep, when He could no longer work. It was this depth of longing and intenseness of pity which now ended the Savior's rest, and brought Him down from the hill to meet the gathering multitude in the "desert" plain beneath.

And what a sight to meet His gaze--these thousands of strong men, besides women and children; and what thoughts of the past, the present, and the future, would be called up by the scene! "The Passover was near" (John 6:4), with its remembrances of the Paschal night, the Paschal lamb, the Paschal supper, the Paschal deliverance--and most of them were Passover-pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. These Passover-pilgrims and God's guests, now streaming out into this desert after Him; with a murdered John just buried, and no earthly teacher, guide, or help left! Truly they were "as sheep having no shepherd (Mark 6:34). The very surroundings seemed to give to the thought of the vividness of a picture, this wandering, straying multitude, the desert sweep of country, the very want of provisions. A Passover, indeed, but of which He would be the Paschal lamb, the Bread which He gave, the Supper, and around which He would gather these scattered, shepherdless sheep into one flock of many "companies", to which His apostles would bring the bread He blessed and broken, to their sufficient and more than sufficient

nourishment; from which, indeed, they would carry the remnant-baskets full, after the flock had been fed, to the poor in the outlying places of far-off heathendom. And so thoughts of the past, the present, and the future must have mingled--thoughts of the Passover in the past, of the Last, the Holy Supper in the future, and of the deeper inward meaning and bearing of both the one and the other; thoughts also of this flock, and of that other flock which was yet to gather, and of the far-off places, and of the apostles and their service, and of the provision which they were to carry from His hands, a provision never exhausted by present need, and which always leaves enough to carry off far away.

There is, at least in our view, no doubt that thoughts of the Passover and the Last Supper, of their commingling and mystic meaning, were present to the Savior, and that it is in this light the miraculous feeding of the multitude must be considered, if we are in any measure to understand it. Meantime Jesus was moving among them--"beginning to teach them many things" (Mark 6:34), and "healing them that had need of healing" (Luke 9:11). Yet, as He so moved and thought of it all, from the first, "he Himself knew that He was about to do" (John 6:6). And now the sun had passed its meridian, and the shadows fell longer on the surging crowd. Full of the thoughts of the great Supper, which was symbolically to link the Passover of the past with the that of the future, and its Sacramental continuation to all time, He turned to Philip with this question: "Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat?" It was to "try him" and show that he would view and meet what, alike spiritually and temporally, has so often the great problem. Perhaps there was something in Philip which made it especially desirable, that the question should be put to him (compare John 14:8, 9). At any rate, the answer of Philip showed that there had been a "need be" for it. This "two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little," is the course realism, not of unbelief, but of an absence of faith which, entirely ignoring any higher possibility, has not even its hope left in a "Thou knowest, Lord."

But there is evidence also that the question of Jesus worked deeper thinking and higher good. As we understand it, Philip told it to Andrew, and they to the others. While Jesus taught and healed, they must have spoken together of this strange question of the Master. They knew Him sufficiently to judge, that it implied some purpose on His part. Did he intend to provide for all that multitude? They counted them roughly--going along the edge and through the crowd--and reckoned them by thousands, besides women and children. They thought of all the means for feeding such a multitude. How much had they of their own? As we judge by combining the various statements, there was a lad there who carried the scant, humble provisions of the party--perhaps a fisher-lad brought for the purpose from the boat (compare John 6:9 with Matthew 14:17; Mark 6:38; Luke 9:13). It would take quite what Philip had reckoned--about two hundred denarii--if the Master meant them to go and buy food for all that multitude. Probably the common stock--at any rate as computed by Judas, who carried the bag--did not contain that amount. In any case, the right and the wise thing was to dismiss the multitude, that they might go into the towns and villages and buy for themselves food, and find lodging for the night. For already the bright spring-day was declining, and what was called "the first evening" had set in. The expression in Mark 6:35 is literally, "a late hour." For the Jews reckoned two evenings, although it is not easy to determine the exact hour when each began and ended. In general, the first evening may be said to have begun when the sun

declined, and it was probably reckoned as lasting to about the ninth hour, or three o'clock of the afternoon (compare Josephus *Antiquities*. 16. 6. 2). Then began the period known as "between the evenings," which would be longer or shorter according to the season of the year, and which terminated with "the second evening"--the time from when the first star appeared to that when the third star was visible. With the night began the reckoning of the following day.

It was the "first evening" when the disciples, whose anxiety must have been growing with the progress of time, asked the Lord to dismiss the people. But it was as they had thought. He would have them give the people to eat! Were they, then, to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of loaves? No--they were not to buy, but to give of their own store! How many loaves did they have? Let them go and see (Mark 6:38). And when Andrew went to see what store the fisher-lad carried for them, he brought back the tidings, "He hath five barley loaves and two small fishes", to which he added, half in disbelief, half in faith's rising expectancy of impossible possibility; "But what are they among so many?" (John 6:9) It is to John's Gospel alone that we owe the record of this remark, which we instinctively feel gives to the whole the touch of truth and life. It is to him also that we owe other minute traits of deepest interest, and of far greater importance than at first sight appears.

When we read that these five were "barley loaves", we learn that, no doubt from voluntary choice, the fare of Jesus and of his followers was the poorest. Indeed, barley bread was, almost proverbially, the meanest kind of food. Hence, as the Mishnah puts it, while all other meat-offerings were of wheat, that brought by the woman accused of adultery was to be of barley, because "as her deed is that of animals, so her offering is also of the food of animals" (R. Gamaliel). The other minute trait in John's Gospel consists in the use of a peculiar word for "fish" (*opsarion*), which properly means what was eaten along with the bread, and especially refers to the small, and generally dried or pickled fish eaten with bread, like our "sardines," or the "caviar" of Russia, the pickled herrings of Holland and Germany, or a peculiar kind of small dried fish, eaten with the bones, in the north of Scotland. Now just as any one who would name that fish as eaten with bread, would display such minute knowledge of the habits of the north-east of Scotland as only personal residence could give, so in regard to the use of this term, which is peculiar to the Gospel of John. One scholar has suggested that "it may have been a familiar Galilean word," and his conjecture is correct -- the word means a "savory dish"; another scholar has suggested the term is used for a kind of small fish, such as sardines. The importance of tracing accurate local knowledge in the Gospel of John warrants our pursuing the subject even further. The Talmud declares that of all kinds of meat, fish only becomes more savory by salting, and names certain kinds, especially designated as "small fishes," which might be eaten without being cooked. Small fishes were recommended for health; and a kind of pickle or savory was also made of them. The Sea of Galilee was particularly rich in these fishes, and we know that both the salting and pickling of them was a special industry among its fishermen. For this purpose a small kind of them was especially selected, which bear the name similar to the diminutive John used, giving the meaning fairly by rendering it "small fishes," and refers, no doubt, to those small fishes (probably a kind of sardine) of which millions were caught in the Lake, and which, dried and salted, would form the most common "savory" with bread for the

fisher population along the shores.

If the Fourth Gospel in the use of this diminutive displays such special Lake-knowledge as evidences its Galilean origin, another touching trait connected with its use may here be mentioned. It has already been said that the term is used only by John, as if to mark the Lake of Galilee origin of the Fourth Gospel. But only once again does the expression occur in John's Gospel. On that morning, when the Risen Lord manifested himself by the Lake of Galilee to them who had toiled all night in vain, he had provided for them miraculously the meal, when on the "fire of charcoal" they saw the well-remembered "little fish" (the *osparion*), and, He bade them bring of the "little fish" which they had miraculously caught, Peter drew to the shore the net full, not of "little fishes" but of "great fishes" that He gave them, but He took the bread and gave them, and the little fish likewise" (John 21:9, 10, 13). Thus, in infinite humility, the meal at which the Risen Savior sat down with his disciples was still of "bread and small fishes"--even though He gave them the draught of larger fishes; and so at that last meal He recalled that first miraculous feeding by the Lake of Galilee. This is also one of those undersigned, too often unobserved traits in the narrative, which yet carry almost irresistible evidence.

There is one proof of at least the implicit faith or rather trust of the disciples in their Master. They had given Him account of their own scanty provisions, and yet, as He bade them make the people sit down to the meal, they hesitated not to obey. We can picture it to ourselves, what is so exquisitely sketched: the expanse of "grass," (Matthew 14:19), "green" and fresh, (Mark 6:39), "much grass", (John 6:10), then the people in their "companies" (Mark 6:39) of fifties and hundreds, reclining (Luke 9:14), and looking in their regular divisions, and with their bright many-colored dresses, like "garden beds" on the turf. The literal meaning is "garden bed," as in Mark 6:40. But on one Figure must every eye have been bent. Around him stood his apostles. They had laid before Him the scant provision made for their own wants, and which was now to feed this great multitude. As was usual at meals, on the part of the head of the household, Jesus took the bread, "blessed," or as Johns says, "gave thanks," and "broke it." The expression "gave thanks" is different from that used by the synoptic; but in Matthew 15:36 and in Mark 8:6, the term is also that of thanksgiving, and not blessing. The expression recalls that connected with the Holy Eucharist, and leaves little doubt on the mind that, in the discourse delivered in the synagogue of Capernaum (John 6:48-58), there is also reference to the Lord's Supper. As of comparatively secondary importance, yet helping us better to realize the scene, we recall the Jewish ordinance, that the Head of the House was only to speak the blessing if he himself shared in the meal, yet if they who sat down to it were not merely guests, but his children, or his household, then might he speak it, even if he himself did not partake of the bread which he had broken.

We can scarcely be mistaken as to the words which Jesus spoke when "He gave thanks." The Jewish Law allows the grace at meal to be said, not only in Hebrew, but in any language, the Jerusalem Talmud aptly remarking, that it was proper a person should understand to Whom he was giving thanks. Similarly, we have very distinct information as regards a case like the present. We gather, that the use of "savory" with bread was specially common around the Lake of Galilee, and the Mishnah lays down the principle, that if bread and "savory" was eaten, it would depend which of the two was the main article of diet, to determine whether "thanksgiving" should be said for one or the other.

In any case only one benediction was to be used. In this case, of course, it would be spoken over the bread, the “savory” being merely an addition. There can be little doubt, therefore, that the words which Jesus spoke, whether in Aramaic, Greek, or Hebrew, were those so well known: “Blessed art thou, Yahweh our God, King of the world, Who causes to come forth bread from the earth.” Assuredly it was this threefold thought: the upward thought, the recognition of the creative act as regards every piece of bread we eat, and the thanksgiving, which was realized anew in all its fullness, when, as he distributed to the disciples, the provision miraculously multiplied in His hands. And still they bore it from His hands from company to company, laying before each a portion. When they were all filled, He that had provided the meal bade them gather up the fragments before each company. So doing, each of the twelve had his basket filled. Here also we have another life-touch. Those “baskets,” known in Jewish writings by a similar name, and made of wicker or willows” (notice this is not the same word as that used for an Egyptian basket), were in common use, but considered of the poorest kind. There is a sublime-ness of contrast that passes description between this feast to the five thousand, besides women and children, and the poor’s provision of barley bread and the two small fishes; and, again, between the quantity left over and the coarse wicker baskets in which it was stored. Nor do we forget to draw mentally the parallel between this Messianic feast and that banquet of “the latter days” which Rabbinism pictured so realistically. But as the wondering multitude watched, as the disciples gathered from company to company the fragments into their baskets, the murmur ran through their ranks: “this is truly the prophet, the Coming One, into the world.” And so the Baptist’s last inquiry, “Art thou the Coming One?” was fully and publicly answered, and that by the Jews themselves.

Session 22

w. WALKING ON THE SEA OF GALILEE

John 6:16-21
Matthew 14:22-33
Mark 6:45-52

1. Read John 6:16-21 entirely through one time.
(1) Matthew 14:22-27 (2) Mark 6:45-52
2. Read John 6:16-18
(1) No references
3. Read John 6:19
(1) Job 9:8 (3) Psalm 77:20
(2) Psalm 29:3-4 (4) Isaiah 43:16
4. Read John 6:20-21
(1) No references

John 6:16-21

- 16 When it was evening, his disciples went down to the sea,
17 embarked in a boat, and went across the sea to Capernaum. It had already grown dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.
18 The sea was stirred up because a strong wind was blowing.
19 When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they began to be afraid.
20 But he said to them, "It is I. Do not be afraid."
21 They wanted to take him into the boat, but the boat immediately arrived at the shore to which they were heading.

This section covers the 5th sign in John's Gospel. John rejoins the synoptic tradition to recount the following event, but again for purposes of his own. As with the miracle of the loaves, the significance of the "sign" appears only later in verse 68f. (JBC)

In verses 16-24 John and Mark again (followed by Matthew) are drawing upon the same tradition, but with marked variations. In Mark (6:45-56) the disciples are making for Bethsaida, and the impression left upon a modern reader is that they were coasting along by the shore and were nearing the head of the lake when a strong northerly wind drove them back to a place not far from where they had left Jesus. Here they took Jesus on board and finally landed in the district of Gennesaret, not far from Capernaum. In John's story there is the perplexing statement (verse 17), "it was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them," and at the close the mysterious announcement that when Jesus had come on board, "immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going" (verse 21). In both accounts Jesus is described as "walking on the sea." The Greek phrase could

mean, as in 21:1, “by the sea.” But Mark (6:47) clearly says that the boat was in the middle of the sea (“out on the sea”), and the same miraculous feeling pervades the story in John. Whatever may have been the actual occurrence, there can be little doubt of the numinous air which surrounded Jesus in the eyes of his disciples. To John, Jesus is from the beginning of his ministry the incarnate Logos whose power knows no limit. (IB)

Meanwhile, those of the crowd who remained near the scene of the feeding were waiting for Jesus. They had seen the disciples sail away in their “boat” without him, and there was no other boat by which he could have escaped them. When on the following day they could not find Jesus, good fortune brought some “boats” from across the lake “from Tiberius.” They embarked and made for Capernaum. The significant note is the description in verse 23. The boats put “near the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks.” (The last six words, however, are omitted in some manuscripts.) In Mark’s account of the five thousand, Jesus “blessed, and broke the loaves” (Mark 6:41). In the doublet which tells of the four thousand, we read “and having given thanks he broke them” (Mark 8:6), though he “blessed” the fish. John follows the story of the five thousand in most of the details, but he uses the word for giving thanks, unto that for the blessing (verse 11). The significance of this is emphasized by the use of the same word again (verse 23), where we might expect simply, “where they ate bread.” The Greek word for giving thanks and thanksgiving soon became technical terms for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. It is almost impossible to escape the inference that the discourse on the bread of life, which follows in the synagogue at Capernaum, has a Eucharistic reference. Its relation to the Last Supper (which is not associated with the Eucharist in this Gospel) is subtly suggested by verse 4, which has no obvious relevance to the story of the feeding of the multitude. (IB)

Verses 16-18:

John describes quite naturally a common occurrence on a lake subject to sudden storms. The synoptic parallel makes much more of the storm, noting Jesus’ power over the waves not only in walking on the water but in quieting the wind (Mark 6:51; Matthew 14:32), but John is not concerned with this aspect of the event. (JBC)

Verse 19:

However, the plain meaning of the text is obviously to agree with the Synoptics, that Jesus was actually walking upon the sea when encountered by the disciples in the boat. This is emphasized by the notation of the distance they had rowed, roughly corresponding to Mark’s “in the middle of the sea.” The significance of such a “nature” miracle, like that of the multiplication of the loaves, neither in John nor in the Synoptics is intended to portray Jesus merely as a wonder-worker. The power of God over the sea is a commonplace theme of the OT (Genesis 1:2, 6ff.; Psalm 74:12-15; Psalm 93:3f.); more specifically, it was through his control of the sea that the first Israel had emerged in the Exodus (Exodus 14:19ff.; 15:1-21; Psalm 77:17-21). Just as the miracle of the loaves portrayed Jesus as a new Moses, who will be brought out in the following discourse as one greater than Moses, the present miracle underlines the power of him who was to bring forth the New Israel. (JBC)

Verse 20:

The disciples were understandably frightened by Jesus’ sudden appearance. Jesus’ words of reassurance, which also appears in the Synoptic version, probably

represent the chief importance of this event. (JBC)

It is I -- Literally, "I am." Thus the LXX had translated the ineffable name of God revealed to Moses according to Exodus 3:14. Once again, John has seen a deep spiritual significance in a simple answer. The Synoptics, however, saw in the miracle that accompanied the words a stage in the disciples' growing awareness of the character of Jesus (cf. Mark 6:52; Matthew 14:33). (JBC)

Verse 21:

They wanted to take him into the boat -- John does not make it clear whether Jesus entered the boat (according to the Synoptics he did); his emphasis is on the disposition of the disciples. (JBC)

but ... immediately -- In some versions, "and ... suddenly". It is not quite clear whether John intends this as another miraculous event, probably he does so intend. (JBC)

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5. Read Matthew 14:22-33 entirely through one time
(1) Mark 6:45-52 (2) John 6:16-21
6. Read Matthew 14:22
(1) No reference
7. Read Matthew 14:23
(1) Mark 1:35 (3) Luke 6:12
(2) Luke 5:16
8. Read Matthew 14:24-29
(1) No reference
9. Read Matthew 14:30-31
(1) Matthew 8:25-26
10. Read Matthew 14:32
(1) No reference
11. Read Matthew 14:33
(1) Matthew 16:16

Matthew 14:22-33

- 22 Then he made the disciples get into the boat and precede him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.
- 23 After doing so, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When it was evening he was there alone.
- 24 Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore, was being tossed about by the waves, for the wind was against it.
- 25 During the fourth watch of the night, he came toward them, walking on the sea.
- 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. "It is a ghost,"

- they said, and they cried out in fear.
- 27 At once (Jesus) spoke to them, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."
- 28 Peter said to him in reply, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."
- 29 He said, "Come." Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus.
- 30 But when he saw how (strong) the wind was he became frightened; and, beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"
- 31 Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"
- 32 After they got into the boat, the wind died down.
- 33 Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying, "Truly, you are the Son of God."

The geography remains vague; there are no "mountains" in the immediate vicinity of the lake to which Jesus could retire, but the word could be used loosely. (JBC)

Both Mark and John connect this incident with the miraculous feeding, and do it in such a way as to suggest that one who can multiply the loaves is not subject to the usual conditions of earthly existence (cf. Mark 6:52; John 6:22-26). One scholar speaks of the encouragement this story would have given to the Christians in Rome in the sixties and seventies. After the martyrdom of Peter, the disciples were alone and the wind would seem "contrary" to them, but no matter how severe the tribulation, the Savior would certainly come to their aid. The narrative in 8:23-27 has a similar effect. It has been suggested that the story was originally told as an appearance of Jesus after his resurrection, or as the vision of an early Christian, or that Jesus was walking by, not on, the lake; but such speculations are fruitless. (IB)

Verse 22:

[the other side](#) -- According to Mark 6:45, "the other side" is in the direction of Bethsaida. This suggests that the feeding took place on the western side, perhaps near the plain of Gennesaret (verse 34). (IB)

Verse 24:

[already a few miles offshore](#) -- Other variations read: "many stadia off". Where Mark says that the boat was in the middle of the sea, Matthew particularizes with "many stadia": The stadion was about 600 feet. (JBC)

Verse 25:

[the fourth watch](#) -- The last watch of the night, the period of about three hours before dawn. (JBC)

"The fourth watch of the night" implies the Roman division of the night into four watches, as in Mark 13:35. This would be some time between 3 and 6 A.M. The Jews reckoned the night as having three watches. (IB)

Verse 26:

[a ghost](#) -- This is the usual meaning of *phantasma*. In Mark the wind stops, and the disciples were astonished; but Matthew as usual, omits Mark's note that the disciples were still without understanding. Matthew replaces this by a very explicit confession that not only anticipates 16:16; but comes near to making 16:16-18 meaningless. (JBC)

The incident is so singular in the Synoptic narrative that many commentators propose that in its original context it belongs after resurrection of Jesus. Whether this was the original context or not--and it seems probable that it was--the story, like the preceding story, has a symbolic significance. This chapter begins that portion of Matthew that is called the ecclesiastical portion. The disciples in the boat represent, in a not too subtle way, the church, from which Jesus is never far even when the situation is threatening and he is invisible. (JBC)

Verse 27:

“It is I” translates a word which can also mean “I am.” These words are often used to mark a self-revelation of God, as in Exodus 3:14; John 6:35; 8:12, 58; 9:5; 10:9, 11; 11:25; 15:1. (IB)

Verse 28:

[on the water](#) -- Matthew alone adds the incidence of Peter’s attempt to walk on the water. This addition increases the symbolic significance of the story. Peter emerged into prominence in this portion of Matthew. His special position in the twelve is clearly affirmed; here it is suggested that Peter has responsibilities not shared by the others. If he is to meet these responsibilities, he must have faith. The faith of Peter is also a prominent theme in the story of the confession of Peter (16:13-23). (JBC)

Verses 28-33 have been regarded as one of the little “targumic” stories added to Mark’s tradition in Syria, where Peter was held in the highest esteem. Peter’s resolution to come to Jesus required great courage, and although his faith wavered, Christ strengthened him before it was too late. This passage therefore foreshadows Peter’s denial of Jesus and his restoration after the Crucifixion (cf. Luke 5:1-11; 22:32, “when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren”; John 21:15-22). Matthew thinks of Peter as the prototype of the Christian disciple and principal guarantor of the tradition in his Gospel, whose teaching can be followed with confidence. He includes the present section to exhibit Peter in this light. For the same reason he inserts 16:17-19 to show that Peter recognized Jesus as Messiah because of a divine revelation vouchsafed him, and 17:24-27 to teach that Peter had been given the power to make decisions regarding the law of Christ. (IB)

Verse 31:

“O man of little faith” translates a word which one scholar paraphrases aptly as “thou half-believer”. The Christian whose faith is not quite mature is a familiar figure in John’s Gospel (John 3:10; 6:26; 7:5; 11:16, 21-22; 14:8-9; 20:25). (IB)

Verse 33:

The disciples give Jesus full Christian worship. In the parallel passage, Mark 6:52, their hearts are still hardened. (IB)

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12. Read Mark 6:45-52 entirely through one time.
(1) Matthew 14:22-32 (2) John 6:15-21
13. Read Mark 6:45-51
(1) No reference

14. Read Mark 6:52
(1) Mark 4:13

Mark 6:45-52

- 45 Then he made his disciples get into the boat and precede him to the other side toward Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.
- 46 And when he had taken leave of them, he went off to the mountain to pray.
- 47 When it was evening, the boat was far out on the sea and he was alone on shore.
- 48 Then he saw that they were tossed about while rowing, for the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night, he came toward them walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them.
- 49 But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out.
- 50 They had all seen him and were terrified. But at once he spoke with them, "Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid!"
- 51 He got into the boat with them and the wind died down. They were (completely) astounded.
- 52 . They had not understood the incident of the loaves. On the contrary, their hearts were hardened.

All three accounts (Mark, Matthew, & John) place this miracle after the bread miracle at the height of Jesus' popularity in Galilee. The same atmosphere of rife messianic expectation, mentioned in John 6:15, is subtly suggested by Mark and is essential to this episode. (JBC)

Luke omits 6:45 - 8:26 (Luke's "great omission"), and some scholars have assumed that this long section was missing from Luke's copy of Mark--that is, that Mark existed in two "editions", a longer and a shorter. But the style of this part of Mark is the same as that of Mark generally (it is therefore not an interpolation); there are echoes of these omitted passages elsewhere in Luke; and the parallellism of Mark 6:34 - 7:37 and 8:1-26 may have led Luke to omit all but the feeding of the five thousand (Luke 9:12-17) in order to save space for his long insertion (Luke 9:51 - 18:14) of Q and L material. It can therefore hardly be argued that Luke questioned any of the material in Mark which he omits at this point. (IB)

Parallels to the story of the walking on the sea are found in Hellenistic literature, in the life of Buddha, and in the lives of the saints (the saints, however, were often credited with miracles like those in the Bible). The narrative cannot be a poetic elaboration of such a verse as Job 9:8b or Psalm 77:19, nor is it likely to be a variant of 4:35-41. The motivation in this story is not the display of supernatural power, or the demonstration of the possibility of levitation, but simply the rescue of the imperiled disciples. Some scholars have thought it a misplaced account of a resurrection appearance, but nothing in the story itself suggests this. Many attempts have been made to rationalize the story, to reduce it to the level of commonplace events; but the gospel miracles do not respond readily to such treatment, and are best left as they stand. Whether viewed by us as historic facts, as poetic elaborations, or as symbols of faith, they are indispensable as miracles for the interpretation, not only of the Gospel of Mark, but

also of the early evangelical tradition underlying Mark. (IB)

Verses 45-46:

“Bethsaida” was at the north end of the lake, in the territory of Philip. But we do not know from where the “disciples” started. “In the midst of the sea” (verse 47) certainly implies considerable distance from land; John 6:19 says “about three or four miles.” As in 1:35, Jesus withdraws into solitude by night in order to pray. (IB)

Verse 45:

[made his disciples get into the boat](#) -- There is a consistent contrast between Jesus and the twelve; here it is suggested in their reluctance to leave. (JBC)

[to the other side toward Bethsaida](#) -- A puzzling notice, since Bethsaida was at the northeast extremity of Lake Genneset rather than opposite them. The twelve probably intended to said the short distance to Bethsaida (8:22, to nearby Capernaum, according to John 6:17), but were in fact driven on a southwestern course to Gennesaret (6:53) (JBC)

Verse 46:

[to pray](#) -- Jesus’ retiring from the twelve to pray (see 1:35) suggests that the messianic fervor engendered by his last miracle constituted a temptation for him. (JBC)

Verse 47:

[the boat was far out on the sea](#) -- In some versions, “the boat was in the middle of the sea.” “25 or so furlongs” (John 6:19; that is, 3 or 4 miles). Mark’s expression is from the LXX where it occurs in connection with the passage through the Reed Sea (Exodus 14:16, 22, 23, 27, 28, 29; 15:8; Nehemiah 9:11). (JBC)

Verse 48:

[the wind was against them](#) -- None of the accounts specifically mention a storm. (JBC)

[About the fourth watch of the night](#) -- Between 3 and 6 A.M. (JBC)

“Fourth watch”; that is, from 3 to 6 A.M. This in accordance with Greco-Roman reckoning (cf. 13:35); the Jews reckoned only three “watches” in the night. “Upon the sea”--not “by the sea,” as some have argued, which would reduce the miracle to zero. “Would have passed by them” --This feature of the story, so strange to us, served originally to make more vivid the fact that Jesus was diverted by their evident distress from his purpose of following and overtaking the disciples in the morning on the other shore; in Mark’s telling this feature is neutralized by verse 48a. (IB)

[walking on the sea](#) -- Seen against the OT, Jesus’ action constitutes a divine epiphany (Psalm 77:19; Job 9:8; 38:16; Sirach 24:5; Isaiah 43:16). (JBC)

[He meant to pass by them](#) -- There is a striking parallel with Job 9:11 where God is said to “pass by” (that is, manifest himself), treading on the billows of the sea. (JBC)

Verse 49:

[they thought it was a ghost](#) -- This same motif is found in Jesus’ Easter apparitions; cf. Luke 24:37-39. (JBC)

Verse 49-50:

Some manuscripts read: “They thought it was a ghost, and all cried out and were terrified.” But the omitted words “for they saw him” (thirteen letters, a normal line in many early manuscripts) are needed for the smooth reading and good order of thought. “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.” These dramatic words contain the very essence of the story for Christian readers, and mark it off sharply from the Hellenistic and other

parallels. What they meant to Mark's readers, themselves living in constant danger, as an assurance of the presence and power of their invisible Lord, is easily imagined. (IB)

Verse 50:

They ... were terrified -- The Greek word denotes fear in face of a preternatural vision or message (Matthew 2:3; Luke 1:12, 29). (JBC)

spoke with them -- In the LXX the term often refers to God's self-disclosure to men (Genesis 35:13, 14, 15; Numbers 11:17; Judges 6:17; Exodus 3:10); this expression further enhances the epiphanic character of this miracle. (JBC)

Take courage -- The word is found in theophanic contexts in Exodus 14:13; 20:20; Zephaniah 3:16; Acts 23:11. (JBC)

it is I -- Jesus' word comes as an answer to the disciples' question in 4:41. It is a "revelation formula" (literally, "I am"), which in the LXX is attributed only to God (Exodus 3:14; Deuteronomy 32:39; Isaiah 41:4; 43:10), and which in the redemptive context of Deuteronomy-Isaiah emphasizes God's transcendence and fidelity to his promises of salvation. Thus Jesus designates himself as the transcendent agent of God's salvation. (JBC)

do not be afraid -- Another expression found in theophany contexts in the LXX (Genesis 15:1; Joshua 8:1; Daniel 10:12, 19; Tobit 12:17). (JBC)

Verses 51-52:

Verse 51 is a more or less controversial conclusion of a miracle story; verse 52 must be editorial. Mark's own addition, relating the story to the preceding (cf. 8:17-21) and stressing the supernatural "hardening" of the disciples' hearts--one of Mark's major conceptions. (IB)

Verse 52:

They had not understood the incident of the loaves -- Mark's conclusion is completely different from Matthew 14:53; the evangelist consistently stresses that the disciples were unable to comprehend the secret of Jesus' identity (4:13, 40; 7:18; 8:17-21). The verb for "understand" is used in the LXX of the God-given understanding of visions and mysteries (Daniel 1:17). Had they penetrated the mystery of the miraculous feeding, they would have known who it was who came walking on the sea. (JBC)

their hearts were hardened -- This NT theme usually applied to Jews (Mark 3:5; 4:12; 7:14-23; 8:11-13; John 12:41) is applied by Mark to the disciples (8:17-21; cf. 4:13; 7:14, 18) to describe their inability to perceive the deeper meaning of Jesus' self-revelation in parables and signs. (JBC)

Summary from LToJC:

The last question of the Baptist, spoken in public, had been "Art thou the coming one, or look we for another?" It had, in part, been answered, as the murmur had passed through the ranks: "This one is truly the Prophet, the coming one!" So, then, they had no longer to wait, nor to look for another. And this "prophet" was Israel's long awaited Messiah. What this would imply to the people, in the intensity and longing of the great hope which, for centuries (far beyond the time of Ezra) had swayed their hearts, it is impossible to conceive fully. Here was the great reality at last before them. He, on whose teaching they had hung their concentration was "the prophet" -- "the coming one." To them he was also more than a prophet--He was a king, Israel's king, the king of the world. An irresistible impulse seized the people. They would proclaim him king then

and there -- thoughts of a Messianic worldly kingdom should have filled, moved, and influenced to discipleship a Judas.

Jesus, perceiving that they were about to come, and to take him by force to make him king withdrew again into the mountain alone. He withdrew to pray, and stilled the people by sending them to their homes, by telling them that he withdrew to pray. And he did pray until late into the night. As he prayed, the faithful stars in the heavens shone out. But there on the lake, where the boat bearing his disciples made for the other shore, "a great wind" was rising, which was contrary to them. And still He was "alone on the land," yet looking out into the evening after them "in the midst of the sea" and they toiling and distressfully rowing.

The lake is altogether about forty furlongs or stadia (about six miles) wide, and they had as yet reached little more than half that distance. Already it was the "fourth watch of the night." There can be no question of any natural explanation for the events of this story. Once more the truth of the event must either be absolutely admitted, or absolutely rejected. Not only would the origination of this narrative, as given by the Synoptics and by John, be utterly unaccountable--neither meeting Jewish expectancy, nor yet supposed OT precedent--but, if legend it is, it seems purposeless and irrational. The writers of the Gospels by means disguise from themselves or their readers the obvious difficulties involved. In the present instance they tell us, that they regarded His Form moving on the water as "a spirit," and cried out in fear; and again, that the impression produced by the whole scene, even on them that had witnessed the miracle of the previous evening, was one of overwhelming astonishment. This walking of the water, then, was even to them within the domain of the truly miraculous, and it affected their minds equally, perhaps even more than ours, from the fact that in their view so much, which to us seems miraculous, lay within the sphere of what might be expected in the course of such a history.

This miracle as it stands is not an isolated incident. It is closely connected with both what had passed on the previous evening, and what was to follow; it is told with a minuteness of detail, and with such marked absence of any attempt at gloss, adornment, apology, or self-glorification, as to give the narrative the stamp of truth, while at the same time lifting it from the truly miraculous into the domain of the sublime and deeply spiritual. This and similar instances of "dominion over the creature" are not beyond the range of what God had originally assigned to man, when he made him a little lower than the angels, and crowned him with glory and honor, made him to have dominion over the works of his hands, and all things were under his feet (compare Psalm 8:5, 6 with Hebrews 2:6-9). Indeed, this "dominion over the sea" seems to exhibit the Divinely human rather than the humanly Divine aspect of Jesus.

There is one marked difference between the account of this miracle and what will be found a general characteristic in legendary narratives. In the legend, the miraculous, however extraordinary, is the expected; it creates no surprise, and it is never mistaken for something that might have occurred in the ordinary course of events. It is characteristic of the mythical that the miraculous is not only introduced in the most realistic manner, but it forms the essential element in the conception of things. This is the main reason of the myth or legend, when it attaches itself to the real and historically true. The opposite is the case in the present narrative. Had it been mythical or legendary, we should have

expected that the disciples would have been described as immediately recognizing the Master as he walked on the sea, and in turn would have worshipped him. Instead, they are troubled and afraid. They supposed it was an apparition (this in accordance with popular Jewish notions) and “cried out in fear.” Even afterwards, when they had received Him into the boat, they were amazed at themselves and did not understand, while those in the boat (in contradistinction to the disciples), burst forth into an act of worship. This much then is evident, that the disciples expected not the miraculous--they were unprepared for it--and even when convinced of its reality, they were deeply impressed by the wonder. It was not in ignorance that they were writing what sounded strange, and which would also affect those who should read it.

There is more confirmatory evidence to be gathered from a closer study of the details of the narrative. When Jesus told the disciples to enter the boat, and to go before him to the other side, they must have thought that his purpose was to join them by land, since there was no other boat there except the one in which they had previously crossed the lake. Possibly such had been Jesus’ intention until He saw their difficulty, if not danger, from the contrary wind. This must have determined him to come to their help. This miracle was not a mere display of power, but being caused by their need, had a moral object. When it is asked how he could have seen at night, and from the mountain height from which he was praying, the ship as it labored so far out on the lake, it must not be forgotten that the scene is laid quite shortly before the Passover (the 15th of Nisan) when the moon would shine on an unclouded sky, all the more brightly on a windy spring-night and light up the waters far across.

We can almost picture to ourselves the weird scene. Jesus is on that hill-top in solitary conversation with His Father -- praying after that miraculous breaking of bread, fully realizing all that it implied to him of self-surrender, of suffering, and of giving himself as the food of the world, and all that it implied to us of blessing and nourishment; praying also with that scene on his mind of their seeking to make him king, even by force. Then, as He rises from his knees, He looks out over the lake. In the clear moonlight just that piece of water stands out, with all else in shadows around, and He sees across the way the boat rocking to and fro, without moving forward and the boatmen struggling to move the boat forward. They are in difficulty, in danger; and the Savior cannot pursue his journey on foot by land; He must come to their help, although it be across the water. It is needful, and therefore it shall be upon the water that He must go.

Against their will they had been told by Jesus to embark and leave the scene of the feeding of the five thousand; just as the multitude, under the influence of the great miracle, were surrounding their Master, with the violent insistence to proclaim the Messianic King of Israel. We can imagine their feelings as they pushed the boat from shore, and then eagerly looked back to what had happened there. Soon the shadows of night were enwrapping all objects at a distance, and only the bright moon overhead shone on the track behind them and ahead of them. Now the breeze from the other side of the Lake, of which they may have been unaware when they embarked on the eastern shore, had freshened into a violent, contrary wind. All energies must have been engaged to keep the boat’s head towards the far shore. Matthew 14:24 says that they seem to have encountered the full force of the wind only after they were about the middle of the lake. We imagine that shortly after they embarked there may have been a fresh breeze from the

other side of the Lake, which eventually arose into a violent contrary wind. It seemed as if they could make no progress, when all at once, in the track that lay behind them, a Figure appeared. As it passed onwards over the water, seemingly upborne by the waves as they rose, not disappearing as the waves fell, but carried on as they rolled, the silvery moon laid upon the trembling waters the shadows of the Form as it moved, long and dark, on their track. John uses an expression which in the Gospels has the distinctive meaning of fixed, earnest, and intent gaze, in the sense of attentive consideration. This serves to show us in the pale light, those in the boat, intently, fixedly, fearfully, gazing at the apparition as it neared still closer and closer. We must remember their previous excitement, as also the presence, and no doubt, the superstitious suggestions of the boatman, when we think how they cried out for fear, and deemed it a ghost. "It would have passed by them" (Mark 6:48) had they not cried out. But their fear, which made them almost hesitate to receive him into the boat (their hesitation seems to be implied in John 6:21: "Then they were willing to take him into the boat"). The outcome of their error and superstition brought His ready sympathy and comfort, in language which has so often, and in all ages, converted foolish fears of misapprehension into thankful assurance: "It is I, be not afraid." And they were no longer afraid.

In order to understand the request of Peter: "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee on the water," we must recall the former excitement of the feeding of the five thousand intermingled with this current excitement of the walking on the sea. Peter's words are the words of a man of a man who is caught up in the excitement of the moment and spoken without any reflection. Yet this combination of doubt ("if thou be") with the presumption ("bid me come on the water") is peculiarly characteristic of Peter. He is the apostle of hope--and hope is a combination of doubt and presumption, but it also one of transformation. Then later He stretched out his hand to save Peter from sinking. Then as they entered the boat, the wind ceased and immediately the boat was at land.

x. HEALING OF GENNESARET

Mark 6:53-56
Matthew 14:34-36

15. Read Mark 6:53-56 entirely through one time.
(1) Matthew 14:34-36
16. Read Mark 6:53-55
(1) No reference
17. Read Mark 6:56
(1) Mark 5:27-28 (2) Acts 5:15

Mark 6:53-56

- 53 After making the crossing, they came to land at Gennesaret and tied up there.
- 54 As they were leaving the boat, people immediately recognized him.

- 55 They scurried about the surrounding country and began to bring in the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was.
- 56 Whatever villages or towns or countryside he entered, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged him that they might touch only the tassel on his cloak; and as many as touched it were healed.
-

(NOTE: Doris Wright died before completing this Devotional program. There was to be a 3rd part to this series. If any digital Copies are found of this continuation, it will be posted in the future. Below is the closing she chose to end the program with after each session.)

Closing:

In closing, I would like to thank everyone for your attentiveness. It is my express hope that after you leave, you will discover that you have learned many things you didn't know previously, or that you at least have learned them in a better light. I am especially hoping that you will have received a sense of gratitude that you took the time to come to this session.

Closing Prayer:

"May the Lord bless us and keep us from all harm, and may he lead us to eternal life." AMEN

New Chronological Order of the Gospels

PROLOGUE TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

John 1:1-14

INAUGURATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH 6 BC - 30 AD

Mark 1:1

Luke 1:1-4

Matthew 1:1

A. PREPARATION FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD 6 BC - 9 AD

1. INCARNATION OF JESUS THE KING - 6 - 5 BC

a. BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST PROMISED

Luke 1:5-25

b. BIRTH OF JESUS ANNOUNCED

Luke 1:26-38

c. VISIT OF MARY TO ELIZABETH ACCOMPLISHED

Luke 1:39-45

d. THE CANTICLE OF MARY

Luke 1:46-55

e. BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST REALIZED -- 6-5 BC

Luke 1:57-66

f. MARY RETURNS HOME FROM HER VISIT

Luke 1:56

g. THE CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH

Luke 1:67-79

h. A GLIMPSE INTO THE FUTURE LIFE OF JOHN

Luke 1:80

i. THE BIRTH OF JESUS AS TOLD BY MATTHEW

Matthew 1:18-25

j. THE BIRTH OF JESUS AS TOLD BY LUKE

Luke 2:1-7

k. THE VISIT OF THE SHEPHERDS

Luke 2:8-20

l. THE CIRCUMCISION AND NAMING OF JESUS

Luke 2:21

m. THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE

Luke 2:22-38

(1) SIMEON

(Luke 2:22-35)

(2) ANNA

(Luke 2:36-38)

n. THE VISIT OF THE MAGI

Matthew 2:1-12

o. THE FLIGHT TO EGYPT

Matthew 2:13-15

p. THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

Matthew 2:16-18

q. THE RETURN FROM EGYPT

Matthew 2:19-23

Luke 2:39-40

2. BOYHOOD OF JESUS THE KING -- 9 AD

Luke 2:41-52

B. INTRODUCTION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD -- 26 - 27 AD

1. PRESENTATION OF JESUS THE KING -- 26 AD

a. Forerunner of Jesus

Matthew 3:1-6
Mark 1:2-6
Luke 3:1-6
John 1:6-8
Matthew 3:7-10
Luke 3:7-18
Matthew 3:11-12
Mark 1:7-8
John 1:19-28

b. BAPTISM OF JESUS

Matthew 3:13-17
Mark 1:9-11
Luke 3:21-22

c. LINEAGE OF JESUS

Luke 3:23-38
Matthew 1:2-17

d. TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Mark 1:12
Matthew 4:1-11
Luke 4:1-13
Mark 1:13

2. PROCLAMATION OF THE KINGDOM IN GALILEE -- 26-27 AD

a. TO THE FIRST DISCIPLES

John 1:29, 15, 30-51

b. AT A MARRIAGE FEAST IN CANA

John 2:1-12

3. PROCLAMATION OF THE KINGDOM IN JUDEA -- 27/28 AD
 - a. TO THE JEWISH POPULACE
Passover -- April 11, 27 AD

John 2:13-25
 - b. TO NICODEMUS

Read: John 3:1-21
 - c. TO CERTAIN DISCIPLES

Read: John 3:22-36
 - d. THE ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Matthew 14:3-5
Mark 6:17-20
Luke 3:19-20
4. PROCLAMATION OF THE KINGDOM IN SAMARIA -- 27 AD
 - a. TO A SAMARITAN WOMAN

Matthew 4:12
John 4:1-38
 - b. TO THE PEOPLE OF SYCHAR

John 4:39-42
- C. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD -- 27-30 AD
 1. IN GALILEE -- 27-28 AD

John 4:43-45
Mark 1:14
Luke 4:14-15
 - a. HEALING OF A NOBLEMAN'S SON

John 4:46-54
 - b. IN THE SYNAGOGUE AT NAZARETH

Luke 4:16-28

- c. REJECTION OF JESUS
Luke 4:19-30

2. IN JUDEA

- a. CURE ON A SABBATH
John 5:1-18

- b. THE WORK OF THE SON
John 5:19-30

- c. WITNESSES TO JESUS
John 5:31-40

- d. UNBELIEF OF JESUS' HEARERS
John 5:41-47

3. JESUS RETURNS TO DWELL IN CAPERNAUM

- a. CALLING OF FOUR DISCIPLES
Luke 5:1-11
Matthew 4:18-22
Mark 1:16-20

- b. JESUS' MINISTRY IN CAPERNAUM
Mark 1:21-22
Luke 4:31-32
Mark 1:23-28
Luke 4:33-37
Mark 1:29-31
Luke 4:38-39
Matthew 8:14-15
Mark 1:32-34
Luke 4:40-41
Matthew 8:16-17
Mark 1:35-38
Luke 4:42-43

c. A PREACHING TOUR OF GALILEE

Matthew 4:23-25

Mark 1:39

Luke 4:44

d. CLEANSING OF A LEPER

Luke 5:12-16

Mark 1:40-45

Matthew 8:2-4

e. THE GREAT CATCH OF FISH

Luke 5:1-11

f. HEALING OF A PARALYTIC

Mark 2:1-12

Luke 5:17-26

Matthew 9:1-8

g. CALLING OF LEVI (MATTHEW)

Matthew 9:9-13

Mark 2:13-17

Luke 5:27-32

h. DISCUSSION OF FASTING

Matthew 9:14-17

Mark 2:18-22

Luke 5:33-39

3. IN GALILEE -- 28 - 29 AD

a. SELECTION OF THE TWELVE

Luke 6:12-16

Mark 3:13-19

Matthew 10:1-4

b. SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Matthew 5:1-2

(1) THE BEATITUDES

Matthew 5:3-12

Luke 6:20-26

(2) THE SIMILES OF SALT AND LIGHT

Matthew 5:13-16

(3) TEACHING ABOUT THE LAW

Matthew 5:17-20

(4) TEACHING ABOUT ANGER

Matthew 5:21-26

(5) TEACHING ABOUT ADULTERY

Matthew 5:27-30

(6) TEACHING ABOUT DIVORCE

Matthew 5:31-32

(7) TEACHING ABOUT OATHS

Matthew 5:33-37

(8) TEACHING ABOUT RETALIATION

Matthew 5:38-42

Luke 6:29-30

(9) LOVE OF ENEMIES

Matthew 5:43-48

Luke 6:27-36

(10) TEACHING ABOUT ALMSGIVING

Matthew 6:1-4

(11) TEACHING ABOUT PRAYER

Matthew 6:5-8

(12) THE LORD'S PRAYER

Matthew 6:9-15

(13) TEACHING ABOUT FASTING

Matthew 6:16-18

(14) TREASURE IN HEAVEN

Matthew 6:19-21

(15) THE LIGHT OF THE BODY

Matthew 6:22-23

(16) GOD AND MONEY

Matthew 6:24

(17) DEPENDENCE ON GOD

Matthew 6:25-34

(18) JUDGING OTHERS

Matthew 7:1-5

Luke 6:37-42

(19) PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

Matthew 7:6

(20) THE ANSWER TO PRAYERS

Matthew 7:7-11

(21) THE GOLDEN RULE

Matthew 7:12
Luke 6:31

(22) THE NARROW GATE

Matthew 7:13-14

(23) FALSE PROPHETS

Matthew 7:15-20
Luke 6:43-45

(24) THE TRUE DISCIPLE

Matthew 7:21-23

(25) THE TWO FOUNDATIONS

Matthew 7:24-29
Luke 6:46-49

c. HEALING OF THE CENTURION'S SERVANT

Matthew 8:1, 5-13
Luke 7:1-10

d. RAISING OF THE WIDOW'S SON

Luke 7:11-17

e. INQUIRY FROM JOHN THE BAPTIST

(1) THE MESSENGERS FROM JOHN THE BAPTIST

Luke 7:18-23
Matthew 11:2-6

(2) JESUS' TESTIMONY TO JOHN

Luke 7:24-35
Matthew 11:7-19

f. ANOINTING OF JESUS

Luke 7:36-50

g. GALILEAN WOMEN FOLLOW JESUS

Luke 8:1-3

h. HEALING OF TWO BLIND MEN

Matthew 9:27-34

i. THE HEALING OF A MUTE PERSON

Mathew 9:22-34

j. PROTESTS AGAINST JESUS

(1) BLASPHEMY AND THE SCRIBES

Mark 3:20-22

(2) JESUS AND BEELZEBUB

Mark 3:23-30

Matthew 12:22-32

Luke 11:14-23

j. JESUS AND HIS FAMILY

Matthew 12:46-50

Mark 3:31-35

Luke 8:19-21

k. 1ST SERIES OF PARABLES:
PARABLES SPOKEN TO THE MULTITUDE

(1) PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Mark 4:1-9

Matthew 13:1-9

Luke 8:4-8

(2) THE SEED GROWING SECRETLY

Mark 4:26-29

(3) THE WEEDS AMONG THE WHEAT

Matthew 13:24-30

(4) THE MUSTARD SEED

Mark 30-34

Matthew 13:31-32

Luke 13:18-19

(5) THE YEAST

Matthew 13:33

Luke 13:20-21

(6) THE LAMP

Mark 4:21-25

Luke 8:16-18

PARABLES SPOKEN TO THE DISCIPLES

(1) THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

Mark 4:10-20

Matthew 13:1-9

Luke 8:4-8

(2) THE USE OF PARABLES

Matthew 13:34-35

(3) EXPLANATION OF THE SOWER

Luke 8:11-15

Matthew 13:18-23

(4) EXPLANATION OF THE WEEDS

Matthew 13:36-43

(5) THE HIDDEN TREASURE AND THE PEARL

Matthew 13:44-46

(6) PARABLE OF THE NET

Matthew 13:47-50

(7) PARABLE OF THE HOUSEHOLDER

Matthew 13:51-53

(8) THE PRIVILEGE OF DISCIPLESHIP

Matthew 13:16-17

l. STILLING OF THE STORM

Matthew 8:18, 23-27

Mark 4:35-41

Luke 8:22-25

m. LIBERATION OF THE DEMONIACS

Matthew 8:28-34

Mark 5:1-20

Luke 8:26-39 or 8:28-34

n. THE HEALING OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER AND
THE HEALING OF THE WOMAN WITH A HEMORRHAGE

Mark 5:21-24

Luke 8:40-42

Matthew 9:18-19

Mark 5:25-34

Luke 8:43-48

Matthew 9:20-22

Mark 5:35-45

Luke 8:49-56

Matthew 9:23-26

h. PROTESTS AGAINST JESUS

Mark 3:20-30
Matthew 12:22-37
Luke 11:14-23
Matthew 12:38-42
Luke 11:29-32
Matthew 12:43-45
Luke 11:24-28
Matthew 12:46-50
Mark 3:31-35
Luke 8:19-21

m. MINISTERING TO A GREAT MULTITUDE

Matthew 12:15
Mark 3:7-12
Luke 6:17-19
Matthew 12:16-21

p. SECOND REJECTION OF NAZARETH

Matthew 13:54-58
Mark 6:1-6

q. COMMISSIONING OF THE TWELVE

Matthew 9:35-38
Matthew 10:1-4
Mark 6:7
Luke 9:1-2
Matthew 10:5-15
Mark 6:8-11
Luke 9:3-5
Matthew 10:16-42
Matthew 11:1
Mark 6:12-13
Luke 9:6

- r. DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST
Spring, 29 AD

Mark 6:14-16
Luke 9:7-9
Matthew 14:1-2
Mark 6:17-29
Matthew 14:3-12

- s. FEEDING OF THE 5,000
Passover -- March 18, 29 AD

Mark 6:30-44
Luke 9:10-17
Matthew 14:13-21
John 6:1-15

- t. WALKING ON THE SEA OF GALILEE

John 6:16-21
Matthew 14:22-33
Mark 6:45-52

- u. HEALING OF GENNESARET

Mark 6:53-56
Matthew 14:34-36

- v. REJECTION OF THE BREAD OF LIFE

John 6:22-71

- w. CONTROVERSY ABOUT DEFILEMENT

Matthew 15:1-20
Mark 7:1-23

- x. CONTROVERSIES ABOUT THE SABBATH
Spring, 28 AD

- (1) PICKING GRAIN ON THE SABBATH

Matthew 12:1-8
Mark 2:23-28
Luke 6:1-5

(2) THE MAN WITH THE WITHERED HAND

Matthew 12:9-14

Mark 3:1-6

Luke 6:6-11

4. IN TYRE AND SIDON -- 29 AD

Matthew 15:21-28

Mark 7:24-30

5. IN DECAPOLIS -- 29 AD

Mark 7:31-37

Matthew 15:29-31

6. IN GALILEE -- 29 AD

a. FEEDING OF THE 4,000

Mark 8:1-10

Matthew 15:32-39

b. CONTROVERSY WITH THE PHARISEES

Matthew 16:1-4

Mark 8:11-13

c. CORRUPTION OF THE PHARISEES

Matthew 16:5-12

Mark 8:14-21

d. HEALING OF A BLIND MAN

Mark 8:22-26

7. IN THE REGION NORTH OF GALILEE -- 29 AD

a. REVELATION OF JESUS AS MESSIAH

Matthew 16:13-23

Mark 8:27-33

Luke 9:18-22

b. DEMAND OF DISCIPLESHIP

Matthew 16:24-28

Mark 8:34-38

Mark 9:1, 23-27

c. TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS

Matthew 17:1-8

Mark 9:2-8

Luke 9:28-36

d. EXPLANATIONS ABOUT ELIJAH

Matthew 17:9-13

Mark 9:9-13

e. HEALING OF A DEMONIAK BOY

Mark 9:14-29

Matthew 17:14-21

Luke 9:37-42

8. IN GALILEE -- 29 AD

a. PREDICTION OF JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Mark 9:30-32

Matthew 17:22-23

Luke 9:43-45

b. PAYING OF TAXES

Matthew 17:24-27

c. DISCOURSE CONCERNING GREATNESS

Mark 9:33-37
Matthew 18:1-5
Luke 9:46-48

d. DISCOURSE CONCERNING PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

(1) CONCERNING HINDRANCE OF GOD'S ELECT

Matthew 18:6-14
Mark 9:38-50
Luke 9:49-50

(2) CONCERNING RECONCILIATION

Matthew 18:15-35

e. DECISION TO LEAVE GALILEE

John 7:1-10
Luke 9:51-62
Matthew 8:19-22

9. IN JUDEA
Fall, 29 AD

a. JESUS AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES
October, 29 AD

John 7:11-13

(1) TEACHING ABOUT THE SABBATH

John 7:14-24

(2) ATTEMPT TO ARREST JESUS

John 7:25-53

(3) ADULTEROUS WOMAN

John 8:1-11

(4) PROCLAMATION OF JESUS AS THE LIGHT

John 8:12-20

(5) PROCLAMATION OF JESUS AS GOD

John 8:21-30

(6) PROCLAMATION OF JESUS AS LIBERATOR

John 8:31-47

(7) PROCLAMATION OF JESUS AS ETERNAL LIFE

John 8:48-59

b. HEALING OF A BLIND MAN

John 9:1-41

c. DISCOURSE CONCERNING THE GOOD SHEPHERD

John 10:1-21

10. IN PEREA -- 29 AD

a. MINISTRY OF THE 70 DISCIPLES

Luke 10:1-16

(1) REPROACHES TO UNREPENTANT TOWNS

Matthew 11:20-24

Luke 10:12-16

(2) THE PRAISE OF THE FATHER

Matthew 11:25-27

Luke 10:21-22

(3) THE GENTLE MASTERY OF CHRIST

Matthew 11:28-30

b. PARABLE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Luke 10:25-37

11. IN JUDEA
Fall, 29 AD

a. VISITATION OF MARY AND MARTHA

Luke 10:38-42

b. JESUS AT THE FEAST OF DEDICATION
December, 29 AD

John 10:22-39

12. IN PEREA AND GALILEE -- 30 AD

John 10:40-42

a. TEACHING ABOUT PRAYER

Luke 11:1-13

b. TEACHING ABOUT TRUE HOLINESS

(1) ABOUT HYPOCRISY

Luke 11:33-54

Luke 12:1-3

(2) ABOUT COMMITMENT

Luke 12:4-12

c. TEACHING ABOUT RICHES

(1) PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL

Luke 12:13-21

(2) ABOUT WORLDLY GOODS

Luke 12:22-34

d. TEACHING ABOUT WATCHFULNESS

Luke 12:35-48

e. WARNING ABOUT INTERPRETING THE TIMES

Luke 12:49-59

Luke 13:1-9

f. HEALING OF A DEFORMED WOMAN

Luke 13:10-17

g. TEACHING ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Luke 13:22-30

h. WARNING TO LEAVE GALILEE

Luke 13:31-33

i. CONTROVERSY WITH THE PHARISEES

(1) CONCERNING HEALING ON THE SABBATH

Luke 14:1-6

(2) CONCERNING HUMILITY

Luke 14:7-14

(3) CONCERNING GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE

Luke 14:15-24

j. COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

Luke 14:25-35

k. GOD'S CONCERN FOR THE LOST

(1) PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

Luke 15:1-7

(2) PARABLE OF THE LOST COIN

Luke 15:8-10

(3) PARABLE OF THE LOST SON

Luke 15:11-32

l. TEACHINGS ABOUT VARIOUS SUBJECTS

(1) ABOUT FAITHFULNESS

Luke 16:1-15

(2) ABOUT DIVORCE

Luke 16:16-18

(3) ABOUT THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

Luke 16:19-31

(4) ABOUT SIN AND FORGIVENESS

Luke 17:1-6

(5) ABOUT DUTY

Luke 17:7-10

m. RAISING OF LAZARUS

John 11:1-44

n. RETREAT TO THE WILDERNESS

John 11:45-54

o. HEALING OF THE TEN LEPERS

Luke 17:11-19

p. TEACHING ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Luke 17:20-37

q. TEACHING ABOUT PRAYER

(1) PARABLE OF THE UNJUST JUDGE

Luke 18:1-8

(2) PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

Luke 18:9-4

13. DURING FINAL JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM -- 30 AD

a. DISCUSSION CONCERNING DIVORCE

Matthew 19:1-12

Mark 10:1-12

b. BLESSING OF THE CHILDREN

Matthew 19:13-15

Mark 10:13-16

Luke 18:15-17

c. DISCUSSION WITH THE RICH YOUNG MAN

Matthew 19:16-30

Mark 10:17-31

Luke 18:18-30

d. DISCUSSION ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD

(1) PARABLE OF THE LABORERS

Matthew 20:1-16

(2) PREDICTION OF THE PASSION

Matthew 20:17-19

Mark 10:32-34

Luke 18:31-34

(3) DISCOURSE ON GREATNESS IN THE KINGDOM

Matthew 20:20-28

Mark 10:35-45

e. HEALING OF BLIND BARTIMAEUS

Mark 10:46-52
Luke 18:35-43
Matthew 20:29-34

f. DINNER WITH ZACCHAEUS

Luke 19:1-10

g. TEACHING ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Luke 19:11-28

14. IN JUDEA -- 30 AD

John 11:55-57
John 12:1-11

D. PERSECUTION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD -- 30 AD

1. SUNDAY BEFORE PASSOVER
April 2, 30 AD

a. TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

Matthew 21:1-11
Mark 11:1-10
Luke 19:29-38
John 12:12-19

b. PREDICTION OF JERUSALEM'S DESTRUCTION

Luke 19:39-44

c. EVALUATION OF THE TEMPLE

Mark 11:11

2. MONDAY BEFORE PASSOVER

April 3, 30 AD

a. CURSING OF THE FIG TREE

Mark 11:12-14

Matthew 21:18-19

b. CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

Mark 11:15-19

Matthew 21:12-17

Luke 19:45-48

3. TUESDAY BEFORE PASSOVER

April 4, 30 AD

a. CURSING OF THE FIG TREE EXPLAINED

Mark 11:20-26

Matthew 21:20-22

b. CONTROVERSY WITH THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS

(1) CONCERNING AUTHORITY

Matthew 21:23-27

Mark 11:27-33

Luke 20:1-8

(2) PARABLES DEPICTING THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS

(a) TWO SONS

Matthew 21:28-32

(b) WICKED TENANTS

Matthew 21:33-46

Mark 12:1-12

Luke 20:9-19

(c) MARRIAGE FEAST

Matthew 22:1-14

(3) CONCERNING TRIBUTE TO CAESAR

Matthew 22:15-22

Mark 12:13-17

Luke 20:20-26

(4) CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION

Matthew 22:23-33

Mark 12:18-27

Luke 20:27-40

(5) CONCERNING THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

Mark 12:28-34

Matthew 22:34-40

(6) CONCERNING DAVID'S SON

Matthew 22:41-46

Mark 12:35-37

Luke 20:41-44

(7) INDICTMENTS AGAINST THE PHARISEES

Matthew 23:1-36

Mark 12:38-40

Luke 20:45-47

c. WIDOW'S OFFERING

Mark 12:41-44

Luke 21:1-4

d. VISITATION OF THE GENTILES

John 12:20-50

e. LAMENTATION OVER JERUSALEM

Matthew 23:37-39

Luke 13:34-35

f. TEACHING ABOUT THE END-TIME

(1) ABOUT THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

Matthew 24:1-3

Mark 13:1-4

Luke 21:5-7

(2) ABOUT A DECEPTION AND PERSECUTION

Matthew 24:4-14

Mark 13:5-13

Luke 21:8-19

(3) ABOUT THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

Matthew 24:15-22

Mark 13:14-20

Luke 21:20-24

(4) ABOUT FALSE MESSIAHS

Matthew 24:23-28

Mark 13:21-23

(5) ABOUT THE RETURN OF JESUS

Matthew 24:29-36

Mark 13:24-32

Luke 21:25-33

(6) ABOUT WATCHFULNESS

Matthew 24:37-44

Mark 13:33-37

Luke 21:34-36

(7) ABOUT FAITHFULNESS

(a) THE WISE SERVANT

Matthew 24:45-51

(b) THE TEN SERVANTS

Matthew 25:1-13

(c) THE TALENTS

Matthew 25:14-30

(8) ABOUT JUDGMENT

Matthew 25:31-46

g. PLOTTING OF JESUS' DEATH

Matthew 26:1-5

Mark 14:1-2

Luke 22:1-2

h. ANOINTING AT SIMON'S HOUSE

Luke 21:37-38

Matthew 26:6-13

Mark 14:3-9

i. PLOTTING OF JESUS' BETRAYAL

Matthew 26:14-16

Mark 14:10-11

Luke 22:3-6

4. THURSDAY BEFORE PASSOVER

April 6, 30 AD

a. PREPARATION FOR THE LAST SUPPER

Luke 22:7-13

Mark 14:12-16

Matthew 26:17-19

John 13:1

b. CELEBRATION OF THE LAST SUPPER

(1) PREDICTION OF THE BETRAYAL

Matthew 26:20-25

Mark 14:17-21

Luke 22:21-23

John 13:21-35

(2) INSTITUTION OF THE LAST SUPPER

Matthew 26:26-29

Mark 14:22-25

Luke 22:14-20

(3) DISCUSSION ABOUT GREATNESS

Luke 22:24-30

John 13:2-30

(4) PREDICTION OF PETER'S DENIAL

John 13:36-38

Luke 22:31-38

c. WORDS OF CONSOLATION

(1) NEARNESS OF JESUS' DEPARTURE

John 14:1-24

(2) COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

John 14:25-31

(3) JESUS THE TRUE VINE

John 15:1-8

(4) SUPREMACY OF LOVE

John 15:9-17

(5) COMING OF PERSECUTION

John 15:18-27

John 16:1-4

(6) MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

John 16:5-33

(7) INTERCESSORY PRAYER

John 17:1-26

d. EVENTS IN GETHSEMANE

John 18:1

Luke 22:39

Matthew 26:30-35

Mark 14:26-31

(1) PRAYING IN THE GARDEN

Matthew 26:36-46

Mark 14:32-42

Luke 22:40-46

(2) BETRAYAL AND ARREST

John 18:2-11

Matthew 26:47-56

Mark 14:43-52

Luke 22:47-53

e. THE JEWISH TRIAL

(1) BEFORE ANNAS

John 18:12-24

(2) BEFORE CAIAPHAS

Matthew 26:57-75

Mark 14:53-72

Luke 22:54-71

John 18:25-27

5. FRIDAY BEFORE PASSOVER
April 7, 30 AD

a. DECISION OF THE JEWISH COUNCIL

Matthew 27:1-2
Mark 15:1
Luke 22:66
Luke 23:13

b. SUICIDE OF JUDAS

Matthew 27:3-10

c. TRIAL OF JESUS

(1) BEFORE PILATE

John 18:28-38
Matthew 27:11-14
Mark 15:2-5
Luke 23:2-5

(2) BEFORE HEROD

Luke 23:6-12

(3) BEFORE PILATE AGAIN

Luke 23:13-16
John 18:39-40
Matthew 27:15-26
Mark 15:6-15
Luke 23:17-25
Matthew 27:27-30
Mark 15:16-19
John 19:1-16
Matthew 27:31
Mark 15:20

d. DEATH OF JESUS

Luke 23:26-32
Mark 15:21
Matthew 27:32-44
Mark 15:22-32
Luke 23:33-43
John 19:17-27
Matthew 27:45-56
Mark 15:33-41
Luke 23:44-49
John 19:28-37

e. BURIAL OF JESUS

Mark 15:42-47
Luke 23:50-56
Matthew 27:57-61
John 19:38-42

6. PASSOVER DAY
April 8, 30 AD

Matthew 27:62-66

E. PERSEVERANCE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD -- 30 AD

1. SUNDAY AFTER PASSOVER
April 9, 30 AD

a. DISCOVERY OF THE EMPTY TOMB

Mark 16:9
John 20:1
Mark 16:1-8
Matthew 28:1-10
Luke 24:1-12
Mark 16:10-11
Matthew 28:11-15
John 20:2-18

b. APPEARANCE OF JESUS ON THE EMMAUS ROAD

Luke 24:13-35

Mark 16:12-13

c. APPEARANCE OF JESUS TO THE DISCIPLES

Mark 16:14

Luke 24:36-43

Mark 16:15-18

John 20:19-25

2. POST-RESURRECTION MINISTRY OF JESUS

April 9 - May 18, 30 AD

Acts 1:3

a. APPEARANCE OF JESUS TO THOMAS

John 20:26-29

b. APPEARANCES OF JESUS IN GALILEE

(1) BY A MOUNTAIN

Matthew 28:16-20

(2) TO MORE THAN 500

Cf. I Corinthians 15:6

(3) BY THE SEA OF GALILEE (TIBERIUS)

John 21:1-24

(4) TO JAMES (JESUS' BROTHER)

Cf. I Corinthians 15:7

c. APPEARANCES OF JESUS IN JUDEA

Acts 1:4-9

Luke 24:44-53

Mark 16:19-20

Acts 1:10-11

John 20:30-31

John 21:25